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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE OUTCOMES OF A CREATIVE DANCE PROGRAMME
WITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN: A FIELD STUDY

BY

CHRISTINA CLARE TOZER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1990



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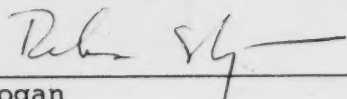
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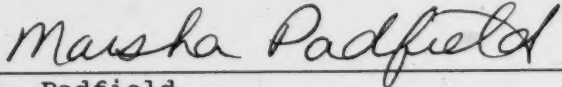
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SUBMITTED BY: CHRISTINA CLARE TOZER
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF: MASTER OF ARTS.



D.A. Shogan



M.L. Padfield



D.J. Sande

DATE: April 11/12, 1990

DEDICATED

TO MY PARENTS

DORIS AND WILLIAM TOZER

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the outcomes of a creative dance programme and present attitudes and feelings of children towards creative dance.

The researcher assumed the role of participant-observer, designing and teaching a ten lesson programme in an elementary school with grade five and six children.

A journal was kept by the researcher which recorded lesson plans and observational details such as responses to content and reflective analysis of the lesson.

Cross referencing of the researcher's journal was made possible by the compilation of data through videotaping the lessons, children keeping journals, interviewing children, teachers and parents, and a parent questionnaire.

The analysis of the data showed that the Creative Dance Programme was a positive experience for the children, contributing to emotional well-being, conceptual development and physical skill development.

Favourable support for the programme was expressed by parents and teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The problem undertaken in this study was that of re-examining creative dance within the context of pedagogy. The researcher believes that cultural change necessitates the re-appraisal and adapting of dance programmes and curriculum, bringing them in line with the contemporary environment and the needs of children today. It is also necessary to observe children as they stand and move before us at the present time. We need to look at them with openness and freshness, not with preconceptions of how the 'model' should be, based on how it was twenty years ago. Violet Bruce (1988) writes in her recent book:

We must think again, using all that we had and all that we can learn about the body, movement, memory, exploration and creation and the making of dance for and with the children of today.

(p. 10)

General Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research was to document and examine children's experiences and responses to a creative dance programme, as taught by the researcher.

The documentation was used to examine the outcomes under two primary headings:

- (1) What are the benefits of a creative dance programme?

(2) What are the attitudes and feelings of the children towards creative dance?

While the original focus of this study was to demonstrate the relationship of creative dance to affect, other significant factors as they arose from the lessons and the researcher's interaction with the children, were also documented.

Hypotheses

1. Creative dance has benefits.
2. Creative dance can produce positive feelings and attitudes in children.

Methodology

Participants

A class of 22 elementary children, boys and girls ages 10-11 years, participated in the creative dance programme. The creative dance class was held twice a week for five weeks. The lessons were 40 minutes long. During the first meeting between the researcher and the children, the dance background of the children was determined.

Journal keeping by the researcher

Descriptions of what did occur and reflections of the researcher were entered into her journal immediately after each dance session. These were written on the page opposite the lesson plan for that session, for ease of referencing. On the broad spectrum of methods classified

as 'participant-observation', this type of reflection falls well toward the 'participant' end of the scale.

Journal keeping by the children

The children kept journals, making entries after each dance session. The journals included personal entries as well as responses to guided questions.

Videotaping

Most of the sessions were videotaped. The researcher first viewed these videotapes after an interval of one day and on subsequent occasions. The researcher's notes regarding these videotapes fell more toward the 'observer' end of the participant observation spectrum, as she viewed all the participants, including herself, from the viewpoint of an uninvolved spectator.

Interviews

1. Selected parents of the subjects were interviewed once, at the end of the ten sessions. Selection was random, using an alphabetical class list. Every fourth parent was contacted.
2. All of the subjects were interviewed.
3. The Physical Education teacher, who sat in on most of the classes, was interviewed.
4. A student teacher assisting in the grade 5/6 class was interviewed.

Parent questionnaire

All parents had the opportunity to complete a questionnaire.

Rationale for the Design of the Study

The study used qualitative research methods. This was because the researcher believed that the nature and content of the study made it particularly suitable for qualitative analysis. According to Filstead (1979),

...the qualitative paradigm perceives social life as the shared creativity of individuals. It is this sharedness which produces a reality perceived to be objective, extant, and knowable to all participants in social interaction.

(p. 35)

The researcher purposely intended to create an intimate, secure environment where reciprocal sharing could occur. It was not the quantitative, more easily measurable aspects of the dance experience that was important in this research. The researcher was not interested in the highest jump or the longest extension. Rather, it was the affective attributes that were considered important.

Reimer (in Stake, 1975) states:

...the arts are characterized by unpredictability, subjectivity, sensitivity, creativity, originality and inwardness; qualities that do not lend themselves to prior stipulation in the same way that overt behaviours do.

(pp.99-100)

It would seem, therefore, that experiences do not need to be a) predictable (i.e., subject to what Reimer

refers to as 'prior stipulation') and b) quantifiable, in order to be verifiable. Understanding may come through feelings; expressed verbally or symbolically. There may be instances when words, measures, inventories are inadequate. In such instances it may be that the researcher can best understand the phenomenon through qualitative introspection. In short, although it is possible to quantify attitudes related to dance as was done by Padfield (1973), the present researcher believes that both of the research questions in the present study could best be answered using qualitative analysis.

The researcher employed multimodal research techniques. This term has been used by Spindler (1982) when referring to studies that use many different kinds of data-gathering techniques. Wilcox (in Spindler, 1982) states:

...the gathering of many kinds of data has been seen to increase the validity and reliability of the study.

(p. 460)

As stated previously under the 'Methodology' heading, the present study used four data-gathering techniques: journal keeping, interviews, videotaping and questionnaires. The gathering of these different kinds of data increased the qualitative validity of the present study, as Wilcox suggested, because the four data-gathering techniques made cross referencing possible.

Taken individually, the research methods enumerated previously contributed to the answering of the research questions as follows:

Journal keeping by the researcher

The value of journal keeping is in the longitudinal nature of the Journal. Patterns of similarities and differences which may have meaning and importance can be noted and recorded. The researcher's journal particularly addresses question #1. The journal also detailed process.

The researcher understands that the dual role of instructor and researcher can be difficult, as it has a potential for conflict of interest to occur. However, the researcher believes that valuable insights can be gained by being totally involved in the process and experience. Wilcox (in Spindler, 1982) states:

While observation in the classroom is often of the non-participant variety, the researcher frequently moves into the role of participant-observer.

(p. 461)

One reason for the researcher being totally involved in the experience is because much of what is significant in classroom and teaching interaction involves the emotions (much takes place 'inside' the child). The researcher believes this to be particularly true in the teaching of dance. Although the researcher acknowledges that the participant observer cannot merely 'read off' emotions (emotions may be experienced but not expressed),

a totally involved participant can observe many significant happenings. An 'objective', uninvolved observer can at best only infer that such happenings are occurring; in many cases such an observer will simply miss them.

Journal keeping by the children

The children's Journals provided the researcher with direct feedback. Through writing the children had an opportunity to become more conscious of their feelings and attitudes towards dance (addresses research questions #1 and #2).

Videotaping of the children

Videotaping allowed the researcher to obtain verification of her own journal. The videotape also contained data additional to that recorded in the participant observer's journal - i.e. events which occurred outside her field of vision, or which she did not notice for other reasons (addresses research question #1).

Parent interviews

It was necessary to interview parents to obtain indirect feedback about children's reporting of the creative dance programme. This feedback served as a check on the researcher's data collected through journals and the questionnaire (addresses research questions #1 and #2).

Child Interviews

The informal group interview technique was used (see p. 9). It was necessary to interview the children to obtain the direct feedback about the creative dance programme. Again, this served as a check on the researcher's opinions (addresses research questions #1 and #2).

Teacher interviews

a) It was necessary to interview the Physical Education teacher and student teacher because they had insights into the creative dance programme and opinions which enhanced the data collection and enlarged the scope of the researcher's own findings (addresses research questions #1 and #2).

b) The researcher asked the Physical Education teacher to record, in her daybook, any comments she may have overheard when the children were going to and from the creative dance lessons (particularly addresses research question #2).

The Physical Education teacher had a particular role in the study. She was present at all but one lesson. During the last lesson the children shared some of their dance work with other classes. This was not a performance but was a fairly informal exchange of what had gone on in the preceding nine weeks. This gave the Physical Education teacher an opportunity to observe her

class from a different viewpoint, passing on her insights from this observation to the researcher.

Robert Stake (1975) advises:

The evaluator should not rely only on their own powers of observation, judgment and responding...the bias of direct or vicarious experience is reduced as repeated observation and diverse points of view are attained.

(p. 22-23)

Overall, the perspective of the Physical Education teacher assisted in the answering of the research questions and in confirming the researcher's hypothesis, that creative dance can produce positive attitudes and feelings in children.

Format for parent and child interviews

The researcher used the informal interview technique. This was because the questionnaire served as an expedient, succinct method of gathering data. Therefore, the structured interview format was unnecessary. Wilcox (in Spindler, 1982) states:

Interviews vary from completely informal encounters to highly structured sessions, although the questions asked are almost always quite open-ended.

(p. 461)

The guided questions (see appendix) assisted the interviewees (parents and children) in focusing their thoughts, but, on the other hand, allowed for elaboration of points and more informative data collection.

The questioning was guided by an interview format of broad open-ended questions. Specific questions arose as the interviews developed. Gronlund (1965) states the usefulness of the unstructured interview in this way:

The flexibility of the unstructured interview makes it possible for the interviewer to pursue promising leads which arise spontaneously...and for the interviewee to elaborate upon his answers until he is certain that his feelings and attitudes are clearly understood.

(pp. 12-13)

The unstructured interview allowed for a probing technique. This enabled the researcher in the present study to dig deeper into the responses and address any possible inconsistencies from the questionnaire or journals. Through cross-referencing of data, correlations emerged which assisted in the answering of the research questions.

Questionnaire

1. The questionnaire provided direct, succinct feedback. The format was, for the most part, checklist style. The questionnaire was an opportunity for every parent to offer feedback, and insights obtainable from the domestic setting rather than the educational setting. Children often talk openly and freely, negatively or positively, about their school experiences in the intimacy of their family dwelling (addresses research questions #1 and #2).

Summary of the data gathering techniques

Ethnographic techniques are important for gathering certain types of data, especially where qualitative measures are being applied. Therefore, the researcher used methods frequently employed in ethnography - interviews, questionnaires, journal keeping. The present study was concerned with people - what they feel and what they say.

Spradley and McCurdy (1972) state:

...in ethnography instead of asking, 'What do I see these people doing?' We must ask, 'What do these people see themselves doing?'

(p.9)

This study is very much about what children see themselves doing. Through their journal writing and interviews the children were given opportunities to express their responses.

Definition of Terms

Creative dance

For the purpose of this study, creative dance is taken to be distinct from other forms of dancing such as ballet, jazz and aerobic activity. Creative dance embraces a particular approach to dancing: positive experience is an integral part of the teaching process and it is as important as the product.

The process utilizes a symbol system (symbolic representation) for the expression and communication of images, feelings and concepts. It is therefore a non-

verbal mode of expression. Creative dance is not 'free movement' since it draws on the conceptual framework of Rudolf Laban: effort, spatial orientation, body awareness and relationship. However, I am not exclusively locked into this framework. A dance may take its initial creation from impulses of literature, language, drama or music. Creative dance is not emotive response or free improvisation, although improvisation may be a prescribed component within the creative dance experience.

In this study the word 'dance' should be taken to be synonymous with 'creative dance'. The researcher considers creative dance to be an art form.

Dance educator

A teacher of dance. A person involved in the concepts and/or research of dance within the context of current pedagogical trends. In this study the researcher is the dance educator.

Affective

Having to do with the conscious awareness of an emotion or feeling, particularly an emotion or feeling aroused through artistic activity. The Alberta Education Curriculum Guide (1982) recognizes the importance of affective development in the following statement:

Affective development...is concerned with developing an appreciation and enjoyment of an activity for its own sake; recognizing the individual self worth of each participant.

(p. 7)

The researcher concurs with this statement and furthermore agrees with the Alberta Education Programme of Studies (1982) that affective development is a process concomitant with and of equal value to cognitive and physical development.

The Teaching Unit

The researcher designed and implemented a teaching unit consisting of ten 40 minute lessons. This is referred to as the creative dance programme. The content of the programme consisted of lyrical dance, dramatic dance and movement responses stimulated through language, imagery and music. The researcher draws from a dance resource base which is broad and somewhat eclectic¹. The aim was for children to experience a variety of content. The researcher considered that multiple and varied experiences were enriching, exciting and stimulating, enabling the child to have more chances to 'shine through'.

Limitations

1. The extent that the particular teaching style, attitudes and assumptions of the researcher influenced the study, either negatively or positively, is unknown.

¹Deviating from the Rudolf Laban framework the researcher has utilized methods and approaches from mainstream dancers and educators such as Alma Hawkins and Aileene Lockhart. Their respective books, Creating Through Dance and Modern Dance have offered useful insights.

2. The research covered a relatively short span of time. This is a limitation but also a delimitation.

3. This study is of an exploratory nature. Data is limited to the small sample of children who participated.

Delimitation

1. The subjects were attending a school where artistic activity is emphasized. Although the school did not offer a creative dance programme, the children may have had a 'natural disposition' towards dance through their involvement in other Arts programmes.

Significance of the Study

Currently, there exists a great amount of material on the 'how to' of teaching creative dance; in other words there is a lot of hands-on, practical advice. However, there is a scarcity of verifiable evidence regarding the benefits of creative dance. Research into dance as related to the affective domain of the child is lacking.

A second way in which the present study is significant has to do with the attitudes of teachers towards creative dance. Although dance is a component of the Alberta Physical Education curriculum, Padfield's study of 1973 revealed a reluctance amongst teachers to teach a creative dance programme. This study may help to remedy this situation; it may help to convince educators that creative dance is of value as an integral part of the physical education curriculum.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Introduction

Within the field of art and education, dance is perhaps the most neglected and misunderstood subject. As noted by Susanne Langer (1953), 'No art suffers more misunderstanding, sentimental judgment and mystical interpretation than the art of dancing' (p. 169). Decades later there is still a paucity of research on dance and much ambiguity and skepticism as to the rightful place of dance within pedagogy and within the field of art. Amongst dance educators there appears to be a tendency either to create general theories of dance, or else to write reports of personal experiences or methodology; there is very little reporting of 'conventional' experimental design research findings. Perhaps dance is not easily explained and analyzed through experimental studies. Isadora Duncan, pioneer modern dancer, once stated (in Gardner, 1983): 'If I could tell you what it is I would not have danced it' (p. 224). In other words, there seems to be difficulty in dancers characterizing and verbalizing explicitly their activity.

Halper (1989) points out during a discussion of creativity within the context of creating a work of art that:

Creativity is good for its own sake. Accordingly, creative acts are neither motivated by reason nor evaluated by rational standard.

(p. 47)

If we perceive dance to be a 'creative act', as purported in this present research and evidenced by such dance educators as Hawkins (1964), Boorman (1969, 1980, 1982), Russell (1969, 1982), Nadel (1970), Hamby (1984), Diamondstein (1985) and Bruce (1988), then perhaps these personal reports and theories of dance, as previously mentioned, are the review of literature. They therefore need only be summarized here, rather than 'evaluated by rational standard' as would be expected of a literature review within an experimental design field of study. It is not that dance literature is less researchable; it is that dance does not always readily lend itself to conventional ways of literature research. Just why this is so will be explained in the following section.

The following sections of this review of literature are focused on four areas of critical importance to this study. The language of dance is discussed first, as the vocabulary of the field is not familiar to the general reader. This section also discusses the evidence that there are benefits to dance participants in mastering the language of dance. The language of dance may be viewed within a larger context: dance as a body of knowledge. It is not within the scope of this study to discuss this larger context. The section titled 'The Right to Dance'

discusses a critical aspect of the context of the study, the justification of the place of dance in the school curriculum, in view of the rights of children. The third section focuses on the benefits to be derived, from an educational point of view, by including dance in the school curriculum. The final section discusses the relationship of affect to the teaching of creative dance skills. The literature indicates that this relationship may have significance within the bounds of dance teaching methodology.

The Language of Dance

There is further difficulty with the process of reviewing the research literature in the field of dance as Sparshott (1984) states:

Dance conspicuously lacks the aura of hallowed theory that traditionally surrounds painting, poetry and music...no one has seriously tried even to enumerate the dimensions of dance meaning, let alone order them.

(p. 101)

Sparshott further suggests that the lack of 'hallowed theory' in dance perhaps stems from the fact that dance was not included in the original group of fine arts, and has been struggling for its rightful place ever since (pp. 101-102). Whilst this may hold true, it is perhaps that theoreticians are not always dancers themselves and therefore have difficulty in adequately explaining the essence of dance phenomena. However, returning to Sparshott's point, be it 'hallowed theory' or not there

is evidence that dance theory does exist: European dancer, choreographer and intellectual theoretician, Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) offers a framework (1960) which allows the dancer to make artistic, symbolic statements about spatial and dynamic quality, body placement and kinaesthetic relationship. There are clear implications here for dance work in affective education since these dynamic structures provide a dance vocabulary. Such a vocabulary allows the body to become a way of expressing and communicating feelings. As Redfern (1982) states:

The great merit of Laban's principles...is that they focus attention on the material of dance, and provide a basis for dealing with this. This possibility of learning the 'language' of dance and not simply of the many dance 'languages' has implications of the highest importance for the subject as an educational activity.

(p.129)

Russell (1982) theorizes that a child comes to understand dance through actively engaging in it:

In dance the child uses his mind, he develops concepts of what comprises action, of the function of different parts of the body, of dynamic colour, of space...at the same time he is engaged in the world of feeling and furthering his emotional growth. Through the dance, form is given to feelings and feelings are generated through form.

(p.30)

The child is learning to dance through 'osmosis', just as she/he learns to speak her/his mother tongue. The dance researcher, however, learns not to dance, but rather learns about dance - just as the linguist learns about a language rather than just learning the language.

Laban has developed the basic concepts for this 'linguistics of the dance'; it remains for later researchers, including the author of this study, to develop and build upon the basic conceptual vocabulary which he has supplied.

McKittrick (1972) reports dance as 'providing opportunities for the child to develop an understanding of movement dynamics through dance experiences in which bodily action, mental action and inner feeling influence each other in a reciprocal way' (p. 43). Here, McKittrick stresses the interdependent nature of 'physical', 'mental', 'feeling' in the creation of dance experience and the development of dance vocabulary.

McKittrick further explains (from his reports of working with elementary children over ten years):

When children dance we do not see bodies merely going through the actions of bending, stretching and twisting..Such motor events as these even when executed with good bodily management, are never dancing. Instead we see an arm drawn up into the air as if by some invisible thread, or a body caught up in a spin as if by some whirlpool force...the movements appear to be reactions to external forces or influences and it is the child's intuitive perception of these illusory forces which perpetuates their absorption.

(1975, p. 13)

Diamondstein (1985) states:

Dance is concerned not only with a body in motion but also with a body of knowledge that includes history, a philosophy, a vocabulary and particular modes of exploration - all of which qualify it as a discipline alongside other academic disciplines. Therefore, dance is more than a 'doing' activity.

(p. 78)

Implicit in this statement is that dance has a conceptual dimension as illustrated by the work of Laban. Yet it would seem that creative dance is not entirely a subject matter in the conventional sense of knowing facts 'about' something. Dance is not primarily concerned with facts and phenomena in the external world. The language of dance is about a different kind of knowing. It deals with emotions, attitudes and ideas about facts and phenomena that become internalized and 'known' through the experience of moving (Diamondstein, 1985). It would seem that for one to fully understand and know the language of dance, the physical (doing) experience must be concurrent with the conceptual (thinking) experience. In other words, 'linguists of dance' must also be skilled speakers of the language they are studying.

The Right to Dance

Over the last two decades there has been an increased awareness of children's rights. In 1978 a proposal was introduced in Alberta, Canada, by a group of international dancers and educators, pledging the right for every child to dance. From this gathering an international organization was formed called Dance and the Child: International, (DaCi). The following mission statement was constituted:

Dance and the Child: International...exists to promote everything that can benefit dance and the child, irrespective of race, colour, sex, religion, national or social origin, and that this

aim shall be carried out in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood.

(Dance and the Child: International, 1982)

It would therefore seem that dance education takes on a global perspective and along with the many other rights of children, the right to dance takes its international place.

The right to dance stems from the belief of numerous dance and child educators that education is an holistic process. Ross (1978), Riggs (1980), Boorman (1982a), Stinson (1984), Diamondstein (1985), Graham et al (1987) and Lowenfelt (1987) all explicitly evidence the benefits as a part of the education of 'the whole child', of engaging in physical artistic activities which contribute to affective development. Hanson (1977) explains it this way:

Children...have a right today to have a holistic experience in all the dimensions of living - cognitive, psychomotor, affective and aesthetic.

(p. 42)

The above-mentioned writers on child development (as well as others) agree that the natural expression of the elementary school age child is 'outgoingness'. The Greeks referred to this characteristic as 'sanguinity'. Froebel used the term Darstellung, 'creative self expression' (in Russell, 1963, p. 15).

This natural urge to move and express has also been evidenced by anthropologists. For example, the anthropologist Curt Sachs reports that there is an inner

drive in everybody that seeks expression through movement and dance...'Captivated and entranced he bursts his earthly chains and trembling feels himself in tune with all the world' (1963, p. 4). The right to dance as discussed above, therefore, seems to be derived from a universal property of human nature, rather than from merely a facet of our particular culture.

This is perhaps summed up in Van Vliet's statement (preface: Boorman, 1969):

It is extremely important that society in general and educators in particular understand the importance of human movement not only as a mechanical action..but as a fundamental means of communication and creative expression. When this form of balance is maintained... individuals are able to participate more fully in the totality of life.

(p. xi)

Developing Affect Through Dance

As Van Vliet states, bringing balance into the education curriculum is important. On the one hand the importance of encouraging analytic intelligence, in preparation for living in a technological world cannot be ignored: on the other hand, 'in addition to the obvious need for an education that fosters scientific and analytic learning, there is an equal need for the artistic, the imagination...only in such balance will the child find his fully human self' (Brown, 1981, p. 13).

From a review of selected literature and curriculum guides it appears that schools do offer art, creative

writing, drama and dance, but consistency of programme enforcement is lacking. These subjects are in most cases regarded as separate from 'real work'.

Studies carried out and documented by Jaynes (1972) and Ornstein (1973), show that the nature of cognition is two-fold and that the 'bi-cameral' nature of the brain allows for two types of knowing. The left side of the brain is dominantly active in analysis, logic and abstraction; the right side synthesizes information of an artistic nature. Research is still very new in this area, but what is already evident is that achieving balance between the right and the left hemispheres has significant implications for child development and curriculum planning.

Weider (1984) dismisses the 'split left brain/right brain' (SLBRB) model as little more than the age-old dichotomy of cognition and affect disguised as Modern Science (pp. 66-72). However, Zdenek (1988) Roubinek et al (1987) and Taggart (1986) agree that to 'dismiss the benefits and potentials of the SLBRB model does a disservice to those working to extend the application of these holistic ideas' (Taggart, 1986, p. 10). Dance offers an opportunity to balance the artistic with the analytical.

Redfern (1973) stresses the value of dance as an artistic vehicle for experiencing emotions in a new way:

Dance education, which includes learning to appreciate as well as perform and compose artefacts, has an important contribution to make to the affective life of the individual, both by providing new experiences of the 'standard' emotions, where these are presented with fresh insight and vividness in mature dance works, and by opening up shades and varieties of 'moods'.

(p. 86)

Inherent in this citation is the potential for dialogue related to the words 'emotions' and 'moods'. However, putting philosophical debate aside, the importance of the citation lies in the fact that dance education allows the individual to explore and express a dimension of the self that might otherwise remain hidden. The present researcher considers this exploration and expression to be important. However, Redfern cautions that dance '...is not concerned with the purging and releasing of undesirable emotions and tensions, which in any case is not the business of the educator' (1973, p. 86). In other words, dance education may serve a therapeutic need but 'dance therapy' is outside the boundary of dance education.

Schmais and White (1968) and Keen (1974) see dance as a form of non-verbal communication in which movement is organized for the purpose of communicating ideas and emotions. Keen (in Ackerton-Parks, 1974) states:

Developing an individual's ability to move facilitates his ability to communicate his ideas and emotions in a non-verbal manner.

(p. 18)

Another dimension to communication is interacting with a group of peers. Creative dance provides a means of learning to co-operate and interact rhythmically and dynamically in a group situation, thereby possibly aiding social interaction skills and giving opportunity to elicit approval from peers. Blaesing and Brockhaus write in their 1972 study that by increasing a child's knowledge and awareness of his body and developing his ability to use it as a means of self expression, creative dance provides a vital means for improving a child's body image, thereby increasing his self esteem.

Diamondstein (1971), Laban (1960) and Kraus (1969) all suggest that creative dance makes a contribution to the emotional life of the child: 'Through dance a child may show how they feel about people, objects phenomena...dance represents one form of communication through which a child shares his ideas and feelings with others' (Diamondstein, 1971, p. 4). Laban (1960) expresses the affective aspect of dance this way:

The most deeply moving moments of our lives usually leave us speechless, and in such moments our body carriage may well be able to express what otherwise would be inexpressible.

(p. 91)

Gardner (1983) indicates that dance may be a way to access our feeling life and a range of affects and emotions:

Dance...can serve as a vehicle of expression; as a psychological outlet and release; as a statement

of aesthetic values or an aesthetic value
itself...

(p. 223)

Langer (1953), Polanyi (1966), Eisner (1978), Ross (1982), Best (1982) and Arnold (1986), all report through philosophical enquiry the benefits of nonverbal modes of expression. Eisner points out that we have not yet begun to take seriously the idea that our symbolic processes are wider than our discourse, and to limit education to what can be said is to restrict what we are capable of knowing and expressing (Eisner, in Rubin, 1973).

Best (1982) makes an interesting point when he states that '...if children do not acquire certain techniques, whether language, the arts, or any other subjects they are deprived of certain possibilities for freedom of expression and individuality' (1982, p. 285). Agreeing with Best we can therefore say that affective education through dance involves more than 'free expression' or 'emotive response to a stimuli'. It might well include this but it is necessary for children to learn appropriate skills, technique and discipline; in other words as stated in the opening of this chapter, it is important to learn the language of dance; '...if children are to be creative or self expressive in an aesthetic activity like dance, it is important that they should have acquired some knowledge of the medium...and some

skill in the form of a "movement vocabulary" ' (Arnold, 1986, p. 55).

Affect and the Teaching of Creative Dance Skills

The author of this study does not intend skill learning to be confined to the 'behavioral objectives' point of view, as in conditioned learning. David Carr (1984) explains it this way:

If it is creative or expressive dance that we are interested in, then the job of the teacher is to acquaint pupils with dance skills and techniques, knowledge of dance artistic conventions and traditional forms and to equip them with a repertoire of abilities to perform particular movements, but always with a view to their being able eventually to act autonomously in the light of this knowledge, understanding and skill.

(p. 73)

Diamondstein (1985) identifies the term artistic expression (as distinct from self expression) as the organization of skills within the affective mode. Both terms are concerned with feelings but it is the latter term, Diamondstein says, which 'gives form to feelings that are evoked and organized in response to conditions of the dance experience' (Diamondstein, 1985, p. 80). Although dance derives from motor actions that have inherent utilitarian functions, dance movements are recreated and shaped. Diamondstein explains that it is during this process that the movements are aesthetically organized and reflect feelings and moods of the creator (1985, pp. 81-82). We can say therefore that these motor movements which are transformed by the laws of dance

design and the language of dance, known to all dancers, become the springboard for aesthetic gestures and forms:...'Thus the dance process uses artistic means to achieve artistic ends' (Diamondstein, 1985, p. 83).

Dancers and dance educators are familiar with the affective dimension of dance. They often use the word 'feel' to convey a concept. Dancers may be instructed to be sensitive to the 'feel' of a certain skill. Affect is also recognized in other physical activities, as stated by Ross (1986):

Athletes are instructed to be sensitive to the 'feel' of the skill execution and urged to strive to duplicate or recapture the feeling in future efforts. Hitting the sweet spot in a racquet has a certain feel to it; that knowledge is acquired experientially by the athlete who then attempts to apply what he has learned whenever he plays again.

(p. 12)

Polanyi (1966) compares explicit knowledge, the kind we can verbalize, with 'tacit' knowledge that we 'feel in our bones'. This tacit dimension is very evident in the arts, particularly so in dance. For example, the dance teacher may inform the class that the purpose of the warm-up is to build muscular strength in the legs by executing a series of ten varied jumps. By repeatedly doing this the dancers get to know the 'feeling' of the various jumps; a certain sensation is felt with the takeoff, the execution, the landing and the recovery.

Laban (1960) distinguishes between the execution of a movement skill and movement sensation. For example, the body may travel, turn and twist in a free-flowing, flexible pathway. This movement pattern will have an observable quality in terms of skillfulness as shown through the application of space, dynamics and precision. There will also be a movement sensation, qualitative aspect. For example, in the flexible pathway the body is in constant motion, giving the appearance of 'ongoingness', 'caught up in the action', '...a movement sensation of pliant extent in space, or a feel of everywhere-ness' (Laban, 1960, p. 78). This unmeasurable aspect draws on kinaesthetic, non-verbal awareness, utilizing concepts that seem to respond to feelings and/or emotion. It would seem that 'heartfelt', tacit impressions become part of skill process in the creation of a dance and such impressions are tenets of the language of dance and the affective dimension.

In summary, then, besides the obvious physiological benefits of dance (or any form of exercise) which are beyond the scope of this study, dance can have benefits in the development of affect. The dance literature presented here purports such benefits. This study intends to show one way in which these benefits may be achieved.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURES: THE ORGANIZATION OF THE DANCE UNIT

Introduction

School is a large part of a child's social experience. Therefore the place of dance in the school (theoretical, as prescribed by the Alberta Curriculum, and actual, as I observed it) is to a large extent similar to the place of dance in their whole life. The curriculum, as well as the literature described in the previous chapter, state that dance is important and beneficial. But in fact it appears that little is done in schools in initiating creative dance programmes. This suggests that there is a problem of getting to the ideal situation (where dance is and is perceived to be, important). This study may help.

Golden Grove School

'Golden Grove School' (the real name of the school has been replaced by this pseudonym to maintain the anonymity of my research subjects) is a K-6 public school situated in a residential area of Edmonton. The school is a small, older building. Present enrolment is 150 students. The school offers an 'alternative' programme, which emphasizes drama, language arts, music and art, through integrated, thematic teaching and presentation. The children assemble together regularly to share artistic activity and presentations. Performance is not

stressed. The presentations are fairly informal and spontaneous.

Golden Grove has enjoyed a good reputation throughout its 33 year history. The school has received positive press coverage for its innovative pedagogy. A wide range of children attend the school, with some tendency, it seems, toward middle class values. The parents, as far as I can tell, appear involved and informed about education. They seem to be seeking an 'alternative' curriculum with an artistic emphasis.

As well as serving community children, the school attracts children from across the city who are driven (in some cases car pool networks operate) or catch the bus.

My interest in education through the arts had led me to know about Golden Grove School. I had met the principal on several occasions. I considered Golden Grove school to be very suitable for my research, since it has an artistic sensitivity and it attracts a cross section of children.

Getting Started

It was decided that the Physical Education periods would be suitable times for my dance unit. Four forty minute periods per week were allocated for Physical Education. I could use two of these times per week. I selected Tuesdays and Fridays, which seemed to fit in well with the overall schedule and provided an excellent

rhythm from my point of view. The grade one teacher who taught the split 5/6 Physical Education class was very interested in my research and was more than willing to assist me in any way possible.

Meeting the Children

A week before I began teaching the dance unit I met with the 22 children of the split grade 5/6 class. We gathered in the gymnasium with Mrs. Allan, their Physical Education teacher and Miss Black, a student teacher working with Mrs. Allan (these are not their real names). Miss Black had agreed to videotape the sessions.

The class consisted of 14 girls and 8 boys. Mrs. Allan graciously introduced me in a low-key manner, then stepped aside, allowing an intimate focus between myself and the children. They were all very quiet and concentrated; there was a sense of anticipation. All that the children had been told previously was that they were going to be involved in a very special project. I spoke with the children for about 25 minutes, explaining the project and how they were going to be part of 'my book'. I explained that they would be doing various fun activities related to movement and dance; sometimes it might be like drama, sometimes we would use music. I explained that they would be keeping a journal and that after each session they would have an opportunity to write their responses. This could be in any form they

cared to select; a poem, sentences, a descriptive account. They might also illustrate their journal in any way.

I then entered into a general conversation with them about 'dance'. Sixteen children indicated that they had done dance before. This ranged across ethnic dance, ballet, jazz, folk and theatre. Out of the eight boys, one boy cheerfully offered that he had been involved in Ukrainian dance. The girls were responsive to the project discussion. They were 'chatty' and asked what clothing they should wear and offered details about past dance experiences. The boys were more reserved. I could sense some apprehension!

Although this was a split grade I decided not to make any distinction between the two grades. Right from the beginning I wanted to secure a 'whole group' relationship. It actually never did become important as to who was grade 5 and who was grade 6. The developmental characteristics at this age appeared not to present a gap.

Seven children lived in the community. The rest either bused or were driven to school. Some children came from distances of 12-14 kilometres. Every child indicated to me that they enjoyed 'their' school, and whether or not they lived in the community they would want to be at this school.

After this initial encounter I was left with a positive feeling about the project. I knew that the challenge lay in meeting the developmental needs of the children through the presentation of appropriate dance material. The boys would be the hardest to win over. On leaving the children I asked, 'Are you looking forward to this special project?'. One boy blurted out, 'It sounds like fun!'. There were nods of approval. I knew I had to live up to the expectation of the project being 'fun'.

Entry to the Classroom and Building Rapport

A third teacher was involved: Ms. Davis (not her real name), the homeroom teacher of the class. I visited Ms. Davis and the children in the classroom on two occasions after the second week of the dance project. This allowed me to observe the children in a classroom setting, interacting with their 'own' teacher. It also assisted me in getting to know the names of the children and in securing the overall relationship (another chance to observe, interact, be with them). During my two forty-five minute visits I noted the group to be particularly harmonious. There was an obvious respect for the children by the teacher, and this was reciprocated by the children. I observed the class to be low-keyed yet positively engaging in activity. I felt very lucky to

be working with this group of children. They were curious, lively and willing to take risks.

During my classroom visits I circulated among the children, demonstrating interest and asking questions related to their project work (on both occasions they had assigned seat work and activity work, related to a social studies theme). They responded to me readily, anxious to show me what they were doing. This was an important opportunity for me to positively reinforce my relationship with the children. These classroom encounters allowed us to 'know each other a bit more', which in turn appeared to strengthen rapport during the dance lesson.

Aspects of Planning the Teaching Unit

Children love to move, but at a very early age society compels them to be suspicious of expressing themselves. Thus the teacher's hardest task is to present dance to children in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

(Leese & Packer, 1980, p. 5)

Bearing in mind the above citation, I gave much thought to suitability of dance concepts, themes, music and skill level, always reflecting to myself 'Will they like this?', 'Will it be relevant, meaningful and enjoyable?' The children's lack of dance experience was a prime consideration during the planning process. I was also very aware that these children were approaching puberty (age span, 10 years - 11.8 years) and the dance material must therefore meet the emotional, physical and

cognitive needs and characteristics of the prepubescent child.

At this developmental stage the children are energetic and enjoy the challenge of physically demanding tasks. They enjoy being active. Therefore, I selected themes which allowed for plenty of whole body action, stressing time qualities of suddenness and weight qualities of firmness. As we progressed I incorporated contrasting qualities of lightness and sustainment. Although children of this age can interact and relate fairly competently in a group they tend to waste time when faced with organizational details. This often leads to excessive arguing and talking instead of keeping on task. Therefore, I initially planned themes where the children worked alone, with some focus and relationship directed towards the whole group or a 'passing person'. Once the security of the environment was established we moved into the partner situation and on one occasion developed small group dances. I often entered their whole-group space, becoming a point of focus and an object of relationship. This evoked energy around them and produced vitality and dynamics which brought constant 'aliveness' to the working space. Therefore, I was usually in constant motion, interacting and teaching from the periphery on the one hand and from the inner working space on the other. I term this teacher territory

(periphery) and children's territory (inner working space)².

Meeting Children's Needs

Children of this age group (10-11 year olds)....are alert to what is going on in the world around them. They need varied ways of expressing their ideas and interpretations. Dance can offer a very valuable outlet of expression and at the same time, through its form and rhythm provide a discipline. To the extent that it is not competitive, it can meet the need for a counter balance to their many situations of rivalry in life.

(Stanley, 1977, p. 9)

Concurring with Stanley, I considered that children are very aware and alert to the environment around them. Lifestyle and the family unit have undergone considerable change over the past decade. Therefore, I planned material that would offer relevance and variety, yet did not indulge in developmental characteristics outside the boundaries of ten- and eleven-year-olds. For example, I do not consider aerobics or jazz dance to be suitable components for this age group. Jazz and aerobic styles stress the use of isolated body parts/actions (step, hip, rotations, head). The actions are often sequenced in sophisticated routines incorporating loud, harsh rock music, often producing an overall effect somewhat sensual in nature. There is an absence of integrated whole body movement, open-ended travelling, relationship and experiential exploration. In other words, the

²These concepts are developed in Chapter Four, page 49.

qualitative aspects of dance, as referred to in chapter two, are missing. Children of this age do not pick up adult initiated movement patterns readily because they live out of their own rhythm and natural urge to move, as discussed in the previous chapter.

This is not to say that the pattern of a sequence, a dance step or a skill does not itself have to be practised and mastered, but that the qualitative range of human movement is valuable. This is especially so when one is fostering exploration and creativeness.

I decided to develop dance material which would provide contrasting experiences ranging from lyrical to the dramatic, from improvisation to composition. I hoped that this would bring challenge and variety.

Objectives:

During my search for music and creative impulse and during the development of lesson plans, my objectives were:

1. to make the children feel secure through clarity of teacher behaviour and teaching style;
2. for the children to develop confidence through the experience of success;
3. to introduce explicit dance terms which would be building blocks for the developing language of dance;

4. to provide an optimal experiential situation whereby the children dance, enjoy the content and feel positive about what they are doing.

Aspects of Planning the Dance Material

As with all teaching we (dance teachers) are involved in a creative process. One would not wish to try to predict progress and needs with rigidity. So, we must have a programme which although clear in its fundamental pathway can be interrupted or restructured as the needs of the week, day or moment demand or indicate.

(Bruce, 1988, p. 70)

As indicated above, the creative dance lesson requires a teaching process which allows for flexibility. This is because the lesson depends largely upon the immediate situation and response of the group. My approach was to be well prepared as far as the conceptual details were concerned. I organized the movement concepts (the movement material upon which to build the dances) in a thematic manner. I related these themes to the dance I wished to introduce and develop. The length of time spent on the themes would vary but as a guide I planned to spend approximately half the lesson on these aspects, which would then lead into the actual dance. In most cases a dance would begin in one lesson and be completed at the end of the next lesson. In such cases, I would recapitulate the concepts during the second lesson warm-up, developing new aspects as I went along.

The main movement themes underlying the dances may be categorized in the following way. I have used Rudolf Laban's concept of movement analysis³:

Body Awareness Themes

locomotor activity: ways of travelling and elevations
stillness and gesture
body shape
articulating movement in isolated body parts

Effort Themes

actions showing contrasting qualities of:
time - sudden/sustained (slow)
weight - firm/light
pathways through space:
direct/flexible (wavy)

Space Awareness Themes

actions in the personal space
actions in the general space
near and far focus
central and peripheral transitions
levels and body zones:
high
medium
low

Relationship Themes

alone within the group:
relating body parts to self
relating body parts to a focus
relating actions to a common focus
partner work
group work
intergroup relationship

Further descriptions of themes are given in Chapter

Four where appropriate.

³For a detailed explanation of terms see Rudolf Laban's Mastery of Movement, 1960.

Each lesson would start with a warm-up which would last about 5 minutes. The length of the warm-up was dependent upon what type of mood the children were in when they entered the gym. The warm-up utilizes improvisation techniques such as verbal cuing, stimulus-response, follow the leader, mirroring, canon. I started at a fairly vigorous pace, with a lot of whole body action, all solo work, gradually slowing the pace and bringing the class to a common focus with an awareness of relationship. At this point the building of the dance would begin. Preston-Dunlop (1980) states:

The key to any form of expression is relationship. It is not one note which makes music, but the relationship of one note to the next, one rhythm to another, one chord to another, one theme to the next...a painting is not just light, but light and shade. The relationship is capable of development and the development of the situation provides structure.

(p. 172)

During the thematic exploration it was a chance for me to build relationship and set the scene. It was a way to explore the many 'notes' which would then sound together to make the 'tune' of the dance.

After much thought and search for the 'right' music, the following dances were conceived using the movement content of the thematic work:

1. Halloween Fun

Music: Dance Macabre, Camille Saint-Saëns

2. Robbers Ahoy!

Music: From the film score, Fistful of Dollars

3. Going to the Edmonton Rodeo⁴

Music: Arkansas Traveller, Aaron Copland

4. Forces of the Earth

Music: from Concerto No. 13 in F major, G.F. Handel

5. A Norse Myth: The World Tree

Percussion accompaniment and spoken text

The dances varied in their degree of pre-design. The first three tended towards more structure and pre-design. The remaining three were more open ended and called for more input from the children. The process of the creation of the six dances is presented in Chapter Four.

⁴Acknowledgement is given to Ann Kipling-Brown who worked on the musical score and compositional elements with me during our work together in the Alberta Children's Dance Theatre. The Theatre was, at the time, under the directorship of Dr. J.L. Boorman.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DANCE PROGRAMME

PART ONE: THE TEACHING PROCESS

The First Lesson: Dance Immersion

The children ran excitedly into the gymnasium; it was Hallowe'en. I couldn't let this opportunity pass by so I had come prepared with the music Dance Macabre (a Hallowe'en 'favourite' by Camille Saint-Saëns) and a Hallowe'en story. We entered into a brief warm-up which consisted of vigorous travelling patterns, packed with action. Keeping at an energetic pace the children were immersed into stepping, turning, rolling, circling, jumping - alternating levels and creating shapes. The control signal was 'and freeze'. The expectation was very clear that the freeze occurred immediately, in order that the action might crystallise in the space and the body gain control, arriving at clear body position and stillness. I indicated to the children the importance of clear beginnings and endings: 'Our movement sentences must have capital letters and periods, with something interesting happening in the middle!'. There was excited chatter as the children gathered around me to listen to the Hallowe'en story. With a whispering low voice (which encouraged the children to settle and listen) I began:

It was midnight; the clock struck its last stroke as the witches and warlocks darted across and around the graveyard, spreading their sorcery, spells and magic. The screech of an owl pierced

the chilling air; all was still. The witches and warlocks circled together and prepared a magic brew. A few at a time they collected frogs legs and other interesting morsels to toss into the large cauldron at the centre of the circle. Together they stirred the brew, then tasted it. So delicious was the brew that they stomped around the circle together, in dance and joy. Suddenly - the cock crows - dawn is approaching. All the witches and warlocks scatter across the graveyard. They sink slowly to the ground - their strength lost

Excited chatter followed as the children immediately started to verbalize and demonstrate possible movement content and vocal effects! I quickly seized the moment and instructed the children to 'run into a space and freeze'. The next ten minutes were spent exploring movement content that would be needed for the dance. Instead of 'rehearsing' abstract movement concepts, I tried to keep the movement experience within the context of the dance. For example, as we practiced the darting movements necessary for the opening of the dance I offered the context: 'The witches are darting across the graveyard. Travelling, turning; ~~back~~ backwards, forward. Sometimes low; sometimes high. Twisted, angular shapes pierce the darkness; all is still, still'. This type of movement exploration familiarised the children with some movement vocabulary. Movement responses were elicited primarily from the conceptual images (of the children) prompted by spoken words (from the teacher).

According to North, 'compositions can range from fairly loosely organised sequences of movement, with

scope for a great deal of improvisation on each occasion they are performed, to exact and precisely defined gestures, motifs and sequences' (1973, p. 85). The composition described below falls within the first part of the above description.

Teacher Cues

1. The witches and warlocks awake

2. The spell and sorcery is spread

3. Groups form to prepare the magic brew

4. Stirring the brew

Symbolic Representation

Travelling patterns using mostly suddenness; vigorous jumps, darting; stillness

Travelling patterns with contrasts of stillness, suddenness and sustainment. Circling, turns, gesture. Particularly in the upper body, arms and hands.

Five groups are created. A circle is formed and a group motif is developed: collecting a 'morsel' for the brew. e.g. Each person is numbered. Number one travels away from the circle; gesture of seizing a 'morsel'; travelling back to the group; gesture of throwing 'morsel' into the pot; freeze in a shape; off goes number two...

Within the circle a common rhythm is created using gesture, symbolizing the 'stirring of the cauldron'. A firm circling arm/hand gesture.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5. Tasting the brew | Using gesture and body shape, a motif within the group is created to symbolize the 'tasting'. |
| 6. Satisfied, the spirits dance around the cauldron | A repetitive rhythmic movement phrase is created, e.g. stepping - turning - jump - freeze... |
| 7. Dawn appears and the spirits disappear | Breaking away from the group (travelling patterns) the spirits scatter. Alone they travel. Gesturing, they finally sink to the floor, curled up in stillness. |

This dance relied heavily on improvisation and strong, clear directives from the teacher. The mood was carried by the music and the story. I attempted to coach some of the movements to improve quality. However, during this first dance lesson I considered it important for the children to be immersed in the experience. In viewing the final dance I observed many bodies totally involved in a spontaneous, fun way. It was very much a whole group experience. 'Dance was fun!'.

Feedback

All the children enjoyed this dance. The documentation from the Journals revealed that the children felt good after this lesson:

Today I had fun doing the ghost dance. I really liked the music and the actions. (M)

I liked the music but it would have been better if we had longer to jump and dance before we got into groups. (L)

I liked today very much - when we were grave people and travelled. (T)

It was fun. I liked the music and movements. (K)

I liked the movements. (B)

I liked doing the Hallowe'en dance because it was exciting and it wasn't boring. It had fun movements. (J)

Today was very interesting. The movement was neat and it went along with Hallowe'en.

Evaluation and Discussion

A number of factors are involved in a successful lesson. Grey suggests four possible process variables; environment, curriculum, climate, behaviour (1989, p. 12). The dance just described might be analysed according to these variables as follows:

1. Environment

Two aspects of environment appeared to be important; 1) a space neither too big nor too small (I have often taken benches and partitioned off a space too big and 'barny') and 2) good acoustics and appropriate sound accompaniment resources. The school gymnasium provided us with a good working space. The music was appropriate, as the children verified. Overall, acoustics were quite good in the gymnasium. I monitored the volume controls on the music sound system carefully and I 'listened' to my own voice. Sometimes my voice becomes strident in a large, open space.

2. Curriculum

The choice of material was obviously very appropriate for the mood of the day! The dance lesson was relevant to what was going on in a larger social context. The movement content proved to be very appropriate for this age group.

3. Climate

The establishment of appropriate discipline, consistent dress code and reasonable noise levels of the children (especially when entering and leaving the gymnasium), bring worth and expectation to the dance lesson. A dance teacher walks a fine line between straight and curved: 'not too strict yet not too soft; not too picky but not too permissive'! Finding the right words during a dance lesson for the right moment is often tricky. The cues usually come from the children. Many times I look at a child's face and realise that I am talking too much and that is why several other children have become restless. Lord (1981, 1982) found that dance teachers verbalize fifty four percent of the teaching time! Using words in an economical and effective manner constantly challenges me.

4. Behaviour

Independent, yet interdependent with the three previously mentioned variables are student and teacher behaviour. These may be verbal or non-verbal. During

the Hallowe'en dance it was necessary for me to cue the children verbally and non-verbally. Non-verbal cueing included gesture, body action, facial expression, entering the group and withdrawing from the group. I named the inner working space children's territory and the encircling, peripheral space teacher territory. I interacted between these two spaces as appropriate. When I entered the children's territory I became very much a participant; the relationship between the children and myself became more intimate. I could not become one of them but I could interact with them, either stimulating or responding to, the group behaviour. When I returned to the periphery I became much more the observer. However, even from the teacher territory I was never passive. The dance teacher has to remain active and alert to the energy of the group. Often much verbal positive reinforcement can be done from this observational point. Knowing just when to leave and enter spatial zones is often tricky. Grey reports, '...the older, more experienced teachers circulate through the teaching space more frequently and consistently than the younger, less experienced teachers' (1989, p. 14).

Dance teaching demands full immersion into the situation. Within the parameters of an objective participant-observer, teacher involvement and enthusiasm

can quickly become infectious, and the children will pick up this positiveness. However, whilst experience is a bonus, many less experienced, enthusiastic teachers, when shown the right skills and 'language' can share their talents and enthusiasm with children.

Backtracking and Leaping Ahead

The second and third lessons refined the movement skills introduced in the first lesson. I wanted the children to select and clarify (make clearer and sharper in their bodies) some of the whole body actions, such as jumping, rolling, turning, stepping, opening, closing and gesturing which they had used in lesson one. In short, they worked on the quality of the action, thereby making more conscious to themselves the quantitative dynamics and qualitative expression of the movement:

Example: Jumping

Quantitative Clarification

type of jump
degree of elevation
degree of suddenness
type of landing

Qualitative clarification

the feeling sensation of
'leaving the ground' -
not lingering or
indulging in time

As noted by Bruce 'quality makes movement alive, belonging uniquely to the individual' (1988, p. 29).

As well as enhancing the quality of movement I wanted to retain the fun element as experienced in lesson one. I didn't want to abstractly 'practice' actions.

Therefore the actions were related to the context of a dance, about the escapades and misfortunes of a band of robbers.

Robbers' Ahoy: Lessons Two and Three

The children found appealing the idea of robbers stealthily prowling through the dead of night; planning a burglary and ending up in a 'predicament', after igniting a safe with dynamite, but were then unable to escape! I had pre-designed four motifs which fitted well with the music (theme tune from the film score, Fistful of Dollars). The children worked individually with the content material - adding their own expressiveness. Movement quality developed as they practiced. For most of the children this was their favourite dance. It elicited positive feelings and attitudes from all of them:

I liked the dance and music but I wished again we could have more time. (L)

I liked it today it was very fun. (T)

I loved the music. I get dizzy when I roll. It was great! (M)

I really liked the robbers dance because it just wasn't a dance. It was fun and you had to have strength to do the safe part.

I would say the burglars dance is very fun but I don't really like wearing bare feet - my feet get dirty. (J)

I really like the music. I like the way we run around trying to find a way out. (B)

This is very, very fun and I love it. (K)

The Videotape Recording of Lessons Two and Three: Indications and Directions

I had briefly viewed the video tapes after each of the three sessions. I now viewed the tapes more closely. It's always exciting to view the product of one's work! I was anxious to see from a different observation viewpoint (observer now, not participant observer) what was happening during the lessons. I had decided not to video the first lesson, so I viewed the tapes containing the second and third sessions - the robbers' dance.

I was immediately struck by the involvement of the children. It was also encouraging to see how clear many of their movements were. I noted that the children demonstrated awareness of the movement vocabulary in the following ways: 1) movement phrases were beginning to develop - i.e. clear body shapes at the beginning and end of an action were observed and transitions between actions were developing; 2) clear gestures were forming rather than limbs 'vaguely moving around'; 3) focus was improving - i.e. eye focus and facial expression was appropriate to the movement being executed; 4) spatial orientation was good - i.e. travelling in a variety of directions, using all the available space was observed, and distinctions were seen between the use of the general space (all over the gymnasium) and personal space (on the spot or the immediate locale); 5) there was a very high level of positive energy in the room. The children (boy

included!) demonstrated an enjoyment of what they were doing. This was evidenced by their willingness to move straight into the tasks; they were up and away the moment I said, 'Go'!

As well as observing the children I also had an opportunity to view myself. One particular technique that I found worked well (as indicated via the videotape) was my constant positive interaction with the children. The observation of the video tape demonstrated that I constantly circulated around the gymnasium. I observed myself 1) travelling through the children's territory, commenting positively as I passed different children; 2) demonstrating actions from different areas of the gymnasium, i.e. (children's territory and teacher's territory); 3) positively reinforcing the children's work. I made the following comments:

'That's a beautiful jump!';

'Lovely turn!';

'Good - great work!';

'Very nice, Teresa!';

'Good work, Mark!';

'Super jump - now do one twice as high!'

As I complimented the children (which was a way of acknowledging the worth of their work and the worth of self) they always acknowledged my comments in a positive way. This was evidenced in two ways: they either

spontaneously repeated the action (seeking further approval; it made me feel good once, I'll try it again?) or they connected personally with me in ways such as smiling, nodding, eye contact, or doing the next action near me (checking that I was watching). Much work has been done on self esteem as it relates to pedagogical programmes by Battle (1979c), Coopersmith (1967) and Wylie (1961) to name but a few authors. It is beyond the scope of this study to offer detail on this subject. However, positive reinforcement from the teacher (myself) enhanced movement responses from the children. This was evident, and noted by me, many times during my viewing of the tapes. However, one might point out that excessive positive reinforcement may become redundant. There may be times when periodic reinforcement is more appropriate and/or effective.

During the second and third lessons I made fifty-seven positive comments! At the conclusion of each session I said, 'Good work everyone'. I shook each child's hand as they left the gymnasium, smiled at them and made a positive comment about their dance work.

Of course one cannot always notice everything when in the teaching role. The video tape illustrated to me when a child was left looking at me, waiting for approval, and my attention was elsewhere. Those moments are unfortunate - but they happen. Sometimes this can

be remedied by asking at some further point in the lesson, 'Is there something special someone wants to show me?' or 'Would you...like to demonstrate?'. A perceptive teacher can often glance around the room and 'know' who is dying to demonstrate their favourite action!

The video tape observations reaffirmed to me that the dance programme was progressing well, that learning was taking place and that the children displayed pleasure in what they were doing.

Boys and Girls Partner for the Rodeo: Lessons Four and Five

Several years ago I was introduced to Aaron Copland's musical score, Arkansas Traveller. I knew at some later time there would be an opportunity to take up the score again and develop a dance composition, based on some of the improvisation and compositional elements I had previously explored.

The music is lively - 'allegro con spirito'. At first listening it seems impossible to distinguish the musical phrases and form. However, upon repeated listening musical patterns become clear. I saw the possibility for six distinct movement motifs to occur. Working with music for dance is a study in itself and cannot be dealt with here. It is also only one method of teaching creative dance. However, absolute familiarity with the music one is using is extremely necessary. It's no good 'sort of' knowing the music and hoping the

children will know what to do. The chances are they will not know what to do, and a potentially good lesson will go by the wayside. If the teacher is clear in the musical structure he/she can cue the children, preparing them for the upcoming movement motif.

During the thematic exploration section of the lesson, the children practised a step pattern, which recurred several times throughout the dance. Up until this point the children had worked mostly within the framework of guided improvisation. The introduction of a set step pattern presented a new challenge; accuracy (with the children executing the step pattern as a 'chorus') now became important. Mastering precision in the feet and co-ordinating upper and lower body limbs was difficult for most of the children. However, in this case the music helped, since it provided a very clear rhythm for the step pattern. I had been careful to ensure that the step pattern fitted very neatly into two groups of eight - sixteen single, easily defined counts. As the children became familiar with the music they could 'hear' the beats themselves, and I stopped counting. By the end of the second session of working on this dance the children were able to fit the six motifs with the six sections of the music:

- 1) going to the rodeo; travelling step pattern (alone)

- 2) find a partner; arms linked, circles and turns (partners)
- 3) slow motion arm wrestle; symbolically portrayed through gesture (partners)
- 4) stunts and tricks; cartwheels, jumps, spins.. (partners)
- 5) the round-up; a leader comes forward to gather everyone up into a follow-the-leader line (whole group)
- 6) final stunts; successive flow sequence of action/freeze - 'leap frog' (whole group)

Everyone freezes in their last stunt for the ending.

Where it was possible (numbers permitting) the girls partnered with boys; I simply paired them up. At first there was some aversion to this (probably shyness or possible embarrassment). However, this lasted only momentarily, and many commented in their journals that they liked this particular arrangement:

My third favourite dance was the Rodeo. I liked how you put us with boys. It makes it more real because most people would be dancing with the opposite sex at a rodeo. (J)

The Rodeo dance was fun. I enjoyed the jumps and step patterns. (M)

I liked this dance. Some of it was hard to remember but I think I did good. (K)

I liked what we did today because it was fun. I got very very hot and sweaty. (J)

I liked the actions. It was harder but I liked the challenge. (A)

I liked it today as usual. I like dancing with the boys. But I got hot and tired. (T)

This dance concluded the fifth lesson. As evidenced through my participant-observations and the video recordings, the children were developing understanding of dance vocabulary and demonstrating enjoyment. This is discussed further in Programme Outcomes, part two of Chapter Four, pages 78-81.

Group Work

We were just over half way in the dance programme. So far the children had experienced mostly teacher-directed stimulus; I had set movement tasks or outlined dance motifs and the children responded, inventing and creating within the parameters of the given task. For the most part the children had experienced 'whole class teaching'.

The sixth lesson was different in process and product. I wanted the children to experience group work. 'Although the skills of social interaction are not well developed at this age,...there is a decrease in egocentricity and an increasing number of pupils will choose to dance with a partner and some may even choose to dance with two or three others' (Stanley, 1977, pp. 6-9).

I also wanted the children to create from their own movement and dance resources, even though these were limited in terms of movement vocabulary and composition

technique. The experience was very much organic in nature, with the dances coming directly from them - the group - rather than from me. I recognized that I was asking a lot of them. However, I was confident that at this point in the programme the task was appropriate, and that something valuable could be experienced and achieved.

A Norse Myth: Lesson Six

The World Tree

Thousands of years ago there grew a huge tree with mighty boughs that soared high into the sky. Every day water was drawn from a well and sprinkled on the tree so that it would grow strong. High up on a branch perched a magnificent golden bird. It surveyed the horizon and circled the tree, warning the Gods whenever their ancient enemy the Giants were going to attack. At the sound of the trumpet the Gods met the Giants in battle. It was a long, arduous battle. The Giants were defeated but the tree was indestructible, remaining upright and strong.

Paraphrased by C. Tozer from Heroes of Asgard by A & E Keary.

I explained to the children that they were going to make up their own dances, taking ideas and images from the myth. I suggested that some parts of the story might be emphasized through dance more than others - e.g. the image of the golden bird might develop into the 'Golden bird' dance; a dramatic representation of the battle between the Gods and the Giants might develop into a rhythmic advancing/retreating dance.

The children and I brainstormed together verbally what movement content might be used to symbolically portray different events in the story. This movement content was listed on the blackboard.

Example:

Image

Possible Movement Content
for Motif Building

The bird

circles, turns, rises and sinks. Spreads its wings, glides through the air. It swoops to a branch. It perches and hovers, making a gesture.

The tree

has twisted branches. Some are spikey. Some boughs intertwine with others.

I didn't want to imprint too many of my ideas on the children. However, I wanted to ensure that they understood how they could take the story image and create movement content. Therefore, before leaving them completely on their own, I explored movement possibilities with them using ideas we had listed on the blackboard and developing these further. I used a stimulus/response technique, relying quite heavily on their sensory perception, i.e. I gave a verbal movement cue and they spontaneously responded.

Example of verbal cues:

- 1) From the centre of your body stretches the branches of the tree. Some branches are twisted; some are

spikey. With strength and firmness the branches pierce the sky...

- 2) A high bough sways in the wind;
 - low to high
 - low to high
 - side to side
 - side to side -
 - and twists around another bough (partner) and links together

I found the use of percussive sound such as a tambour drum and wooden claves helpful in eliciting appropriate movement quality. I selected several of the images from the myth and introduced movement possibilities in the above way. I then asked the children to make groups of four or five and create their own group dances. I circulated around each group offering advice. In seeking clarification of movements, quality and group relationship I asked the following questions:

What is your group shape at the very beginning of your dance?

What relationship is occurring - who are you related to?

How does this relationship change as the dance develops? (Relationship is important - otherwise the group focus gets lost and 'individual solos' occur instead of a group dance).

Could you repeat that lovely jump? Perhaps do several as a group, so that a group rhythm might develop. Don't be afraid to repeat actions either together or simultaneously. Try and develop a sense of group awareness and group unity (I would then demonstrate within the group context).

As you rise and sink together is there lightness or firmness in your body? Let's practice that motif. Good - I can see that your whole body is light as you rise and firm as you sink. Now, what part of the body is leading the action? Good - the hands.

Make the end of your dance very clear. What group shape occurs? How are you related to the person next to you?

Working in a group situation was indeed difficult for most of the children. In the groups where there was a natural leader, there was more productivity and success. There was one group with no natural leader, and it was difficult for that group to achieve anything without my help and explicit instruction. Individuals within the group had good ideas but lacked the ability to organize as a group.

As I observed the groups from the periphery I could see a lot of dynamic group interaction occurring in the form of individualised actions. However, there was a lack of group cohesion. This lesson in fact turned out to be one of group process rather than dance product! So I accepted that the lesson took a different focus. I wanted to bring the lesson to a climactic conclusion so I asked each group to show their dance. I thought it inappropriate to single out groups at this stage so each group presented their dances 'for me' - at the same time. As the groups finished at different times I asked that the ending positions be held, until I signalled to relax. The staggering endings produced an interesting effect, as I asked each group to relate their ending position to another group (focus on any group). It was an overall

effect of 'groups within a group' and it ended the lesson in a cohesive way.

Journal comments related to this lesson were varied:

This gym period was not my favourite.

My group spent a lot of time arguing.

I liked today very much - I like the challenge of working in a group.

Improving the Quality of Movement: Lessons Seven and Eight

The children had enjoyed working with contrasts of time and weight; they particularly enjoyed the sensation of speed and vigour, as experienced through whole body actions such as travelling, jumping, turning, leaping and spiralling. 'Children of this age (ten and eleven) have plenty of energy...they enjoy vigorous activity and lively rhythm' (Stanley, 1977, pp. 7-8). I continued to work with whole body actions but I refined these actions. I also developed the concept of how actions could be sustained. By introducing this concept, the children experienced contrasting movement qualities (sustained/sudden) and also developed contrasting rhythmical phrases (suddenness versus sustainment). The children had demonstrated an appreciation for contrasts in weight (firm/light) and also enjoyed and differentiated spatial pathways (direct/flexible).

The above-mentioned concepts were brought together in a dance titled, Forces of the Earth; A Dance About Rocks

(lessons seven and eight). The music was very appropriate since the musical form demonstrated, very clearly, distinctions between quick tempo and slow tempo. It also had four well defined sections which fitted with the four sections of the dance: 1) the rocks erupt from the crust of the earth, movement content emphasizes suddenness; 2) the ebb and flow of the sea laps against the rocks, movement content emphasizes sustained movement; 3) birds travel and hover on the rocks, movement content emphasizes spatial pathways; 4) the rocks explode and cluster together forming an island, movement content emphasizes firmness/suddenness.

The children had no difficulty in achieving the quality of suddenness, firmness and lightness. The sustained movements presented a challenge; it was difficult for the children to keep the action (swaying and gesture) slow yet fluid (ongoing). I found that the music helped enormously. It was especially helpful in setting the mood of each section and in suggesting the appropriate movement quality. For example, it's difficult for the body to express lightness and liveliness when the music clearly expresses slowness, and heaviness. The children danced individually, each creating within the parameters of each dance section. I had pre-designed four motifs for each of the four sections; this provided the compositional form of the

dance. Even though the children were dancing individually there were many instances when relationship spontaneously occurred. I particularly observed this (during the lesson) as the children practiced the second dance motif; the waves ebbing and flowing against the rocks. We had developed a sustained swaying gesture, which started in the arms, extended into the body, and developed into an expanding/contracting travelling pattern. As the children travelled, their spatial pathways took them around or near to other children and there were some exciting moments of spontaneous relationship, which included partner improvisation. When I observe spontaneous occurrences such as these, I am somewhat reluctant to draw the children's attention to what is happening; sometimes spontaneous creativity is best left alone. Hankin (in Grey, 1989) states:

Perhaps what is most important, particularly as we introduce beginners to the art of dance, is that they experience movement as an expressive activity, one that is intimately tied to human feeling.

(p. 69)

However, Hankin (in Gray, 1989) also states:

...dance learning is enhanced when students gain meaning and generate meaningful relationships kinaesthetically and cognitively.

(p. 70)

It would seem therefore that the dance teacher must be wise as to when 'spontaneous creativity is best left

alone' and when on the other hand she/he needs to interject to deepen conceptual understanding.

When working in dance with elementary age children it seems that the teacher's role is to facilitate creativity. This may be done by surrounding and immersing the children in stimulation that may evoke creative action. These spontaneous times are balanced with times of formal type teaching, when the teacher explicitly engages the children in the process of selecting, practising and improving for the purpose of enhancing dance quality and learning.

The Children Share their Work

'Performing in front of people really feels good'
(J, Grade 6)

Preparations

I had explained to the children that they would be showing their dances to other classes in the school. They were excited about this. Bruce (1988) characterizes children's performance in this way:

It is important that children perform, that they share their work, that they discuss it, improve it, that they watch others...performances are occasions when all come to share with the children; so let us have performances within the class, for assembly, for parents and other adults...the arts look forward; they are balancers of the curriculum, bringing work to a climax, giving confidence and pride, contributing to the art form.

(pp. 20-21)

Due to illness and the usual variety of happenings in schools there had been several times when different

children had missed class. I therefore thought it necessary to spend the ninth lesson reviewing the four dances we were presenting - Robbers' Ahoy, Rodeo, Forces of the Earth, The World Tree. This we did successfully. I explained to the children that they might wear some evocative costume for each dance. We discussed this and decided that a colourful handkerchief could be a versatile accessory. It would serve as a neckerchief for the rodeo dance and a mask for the robber's dance. I avoided complicated costume needs since I did not want to stress the theatrical aspect of performance.

The principal of the school was very enthusiastic about the dance programme and asked to watch the presentation. It had been arranged that several other classes and their teachers would also be present. Mrs. Allan attended and also Miss Black (student teacher) who videotaped this occasion.

The children were very enthusiastic about presenting their work. Dancing for an audience seemed to heighten the dance experience for them - making it something special.

The audience sat on benches around the gymnasium, leaving lots of floor space for the dancers.

The following extract is from my Journal, written almost immediately after the presentation. All the children had returned to their classrooms as I sat alone

in the gymnasium. The extract is a reflection of events before the presentation, during the presentation and after the presentation.

I was rather nervous because so many children had been absent during the past two weeks. I hoped they felt secure. The girls were very excited and chatty. Several came running to me in the gymnasium as I was organizing the music and benches - 'We've forgotten our scarves'. I told them that it didn't matter. I had several spare ones. One boy (S) forgot his scarf. I gave him the large paisley scarf I was wearing. S was almost bouncing off the walls. He's such an active boy. Excellent with creative movement - very imaginative - but never calm. I like his creative mind. He's a daredevil. He started jumping around - doing back flips. I asked him to help me with the benches. He's so willing. He came right over. R is the smallest boy. The girls tease him. He's the clown of the class. He likes to dance. He likes to perform. He likes to be noticed.

S and R could have been discipline problems but they never were. They responded well to the work. They responded to praise and positive reinforcement. They danced really well today. They were 'glowing'. They have well proportioned bodies and good coordination. They like to demonstrate physical skills. They are both expressive. This was a chance for them to excel and they did excel today.

B is a mature boy. He's good at lots of things. He's good at sports. As he entered the gymnasium he immediately struck up a conversation with me about hockey. I tried to respond with knowledge about last night's hockey game. B is academic. He's got a keen mind. He said that he was looking forward to the performance. He said he loved the Robber's music. He told me he enjoyed dance because he liked getting up a sweat.

Recess was over. The children gathered around me as the audience came in. Mrs. Allan directed them to the benches. The children sat quietly on the floor with me. When everyone was in I addressed the audience. I spoke briefly - thanking them for coming to share our dances with us. The children

(dancers) were so good. They all did their best. They had to really pay attention during the tree dance. It was mostly improvised because so many children had been absent when we reviewed it. They all responded to my instructions so well. Everything was over so quickly. The principal stood up and thanked us. He rushed up to me asking if we could do another performance another day for the whole school!

The children remained in the gym with me. Everyone else left. I had made a snack and brought juice. Mrs. Allan and Miss Black returned to the gym. They expressed their thanks and congratulated the children. The children were happy. They had done well and they knew it. Mrs. Allan took the children back to the classroom. We had arranged that they write in their Journals. The children thanked me as they left the gym. Everything ended on a very positive tone. As B left the gym he smiled and said loudly:

'I really enjoyed myself. What I like in performances or sharings is when all the people clap. I'm glad I wore my deodorant, everyone got really hot in here - P.S. I really liked your classes'!

Part One of Chapter Four has presented the teaching of the Creative Dance Programme - the process and occurrences of the ten lessons. Part Two of Chapter Four presents the outcomes as related to journal writing, interviews, videotape recordings and the parent questionnaire.

PART TWO: PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

Feedback From the Children

Taped Interviews

Three days after the sharing I returned to Golden Grove School to interview the children of grades five-six. Each group interview lasted approximately twenty minutes.

I found the group interview technique to be very effective.⁵ The children eagerly gave their opinions and did not appear shy or inhibited. They readily 'picked up' on each other's comments, agreeing, disagreeing or elaborating on a point.

As indicated previously in Chapter One, page 9, the informed, probing interviewing technique was used. I asked the children leading questions to stimulate group discussion. Subsidiary questions would often arise either directly from the leading question or from the discussion.

I played back the tapes several times (to myself) in order to transcribe the children's comments. The following is a transcribed documentation of the children's responses:

⁵I used the informal interview technique as planned and discussed in Chapter One, page 9. As suggested by Walker and Adelman (1975) the group interview technique is very appropriate when interviewing children (see appendix).

Question #1. Did you like the Creative Dance Programme?

Twenty children responded positively, almost immediately when asked. Two children (one boy and one girl) responded in an indifferent manner. I had to probe to get their responses which were, 'It was good - most of the time' and 'Yes, I liked it - it was O.K.'.

Examples of other responses were:

It was fun, overall I liked the things we did.

I loved it.

It was excellent.

I really liked the dancing.

I liked it - it was very fun.

Some children elaborated on their responses. I addressed the question collectively, then individually around the group. This encouraged others to offer further elaborated comment. There were often times when I had to monitor the responses because all the children talked at once. (Examples of elaborated responses were:

Yes, I liked the dance programme. I liked the Hallowe'en dance and the Robbers' dance a lot. I liked running around and fast actions. The 'rocks' wasn't my favourite dance. I don't like going slow.

(girl)

When I think of dance I think kind of boring. I did Swedish dancing and it was boring. This dancing was much better. I wasn't bored at all. I thought I would be bored but I wasn't.

(boy)

I thought we were going to be holding hands and doing stuff like that. It (the creative dance

programme) wasn't like I thought it was going to be. It was good. I liked it.

(boy)

The documentation revealed that most of the children, especially the boys, came into the first dance lesson with a preconceived idea about creative dance. All the boys indicated that any past association with dance had been negative. Except for one boy, they all put any type of dancing under the 'collective' heading of ballet ('It's dance, it must be ballet'). The girls associated creative dance with gymnastics, jazz dance, ice skating and ballet, regardless of whether or not they had experienced any of these activities.

Question #2. What did you learn?

The initial responses to this question were very brief and varied:

I learned that I could dance.

I learned how to express my feelings.

I learned how to stretch and use my body.

I learned how to do movements.

I didn't think I could dance like that.

The group situation helped some children further clarify their answers. The probing technique was useful as I could evoke further discussion by 'taking up' one of the answers and redirecting it as a question - e.g. 'Did anyone else learn how to express feelings?' and 'Is it important to be able to express feelings?' These

questions produced positive replies from every child in every group. There was a consensus that, 'creative dance was a way to express feelings and emotions'. Every child thought expressing feelings was important, although many were unable to expand beyond, 'Yes - I think it's important to express feelings'. Examples of responses related to the childrens' discussion of dance as a way of expressing feelings were:

Dance felt good - it was fun so I felt good.

If I was having a bad day or something I would go to your class and I felt better. It feels good to dance in the gym.

I feel better when I'm away from my desk.

The Rodeo dance made me feel happy (nods of approval from all group members).

You learn skills and things about yourself - it felt good.

You can work hard and build up a sweat - that feels good.

It felt good - like sports.

Question #3. Which dance was your favourite?

The answer to this question was unanimous: 'My favourite dance was the Robbers' dance'. The second favourite seemed to be the Rodeo (some children were undecided whether they liked the Rodeo or Hallowe'en dance as their second favourite). There was no doubt that this group of children certainly liked high powered action! There was only one child (girl) who offered positive comment on slow, sustained movements: 'I like

slow, emotional type - mood - dances as well as very quick energetic dances'. However, the children did indicate that they liked firm (strong), slow actions - as in the 'pulling open of the safe in the Robbers' dance'. The documentation seems to indicate that they related to symbolism through concrete image (opening a safe) much more than they related to symbolism through abstraction (symbolism evoked through self felt mood or music). A final comment from one girl was, ...'the slow bits get boring'!

Question #4. What didn't you like about the Creative Dance Programme?

The immediate response to this question from all of the children was, 'I didn't like taking my socks and shoes off'! Perhaps we are undergoing a cultural change whereby children don't like exposing their bare feet? or is it a characteristic of this age group? The reasons the children gave for their reluctance to this request for baring the feet was, 'I don't like getting my feet dirty', and 'I don't like washing my feet'!

I rephrased the question: 'What parts of the programme were less interesting'? Several answered, 'When you're talking'. Others said:

When you give instructions I get bored.

When we practice bits it's not so interesting.

I didn't like working in a group. My group argued a lot.

I like working by myself because it's easier.

Personally, I liked everything.

I liked it all and want to do more.

When asked, every child agreed that they would like to do more creative dance. Some asked me, 'Are you coming again?' and 'Will we be doing more?'. All the children (except four, who didn't comment) agreed that although there were less interesting parts in the lessons, these didn't distract from the overall programme. As one girl stated 'It was worth it all because I loved the performance.' All the children agreed that they liked dancing in front of other people - 'It feels good'.

Children's Journals

Journal writing proved to be a difficult task to organize properly; there never seemed to be enough time to write in the journals. I had arranged with the class teacher that the children should write in their journals on returning to their classroom after the lesson or during 'free time'. However, other activities often took precedence. Many of the children failed to make regular entries. Ideally I should have supervised the journal writing myself. This was not possible.

All twenty-two children made entries to a lesser or greater degree. All children made the last journal entry, after the sharing. The children's journal

documentation reveals the following pattern regarding the number of children making entries after a specific lesson:

- Lesson one (Hallowe'en dance) - 22 journal entries
- Lesson Two (Robbers' dance) - 22 journal entries
- Lesson Three (Robbers' dance) - 21 journal entries
- Lesson Four (Rodeo dance) - 19 journal entries
- Lesson Five (Rodeo dance) - 18 journal entries
- Lesson Six (Norse Myth) - 14 journal entries
- Lesson Seven (Rocks dance) - 17 journal entries
- Lesson Eight (Rocks dance) - 16 journal entries
- Lesson Nine (Pre-sharing review) - 20 journal entries
- Lesson Ten (Sharing) - 22 journal entries⁶

All the children preferred to make their own style of entry. They resisted the guided questions I offered them. Many children illustrated their journals. The journal comments indicate little variance - they all indicated positive attitudes:

I enjoyed dance today.

I like the dance actions.

⁶It may be interesting to note that the most journal entries were made after the children's favourite dances (see p. 73), and after the sharing, which the children also documented as a very positive experience (see p. 77). There may be some correlation between a positive dance experience and the likelihood of more journal entries. However, the researcher is able to make tentative inference only. Conclusive comment would require further extensive research. For example, variables such as rates of absenteeism and time allocation for journal writing by the class teacher, would need to be investigated.

I really liked dance - it was fun.

I very, very much loved all the dances.

I really liked the dance classes we had except I wanted to do more of the activity.

The dance period was fun like usual.

I enjoyed all the lessons.

I had a great time in dance, thank you.

During the course of the creative dance programme the children often brought their journals to the lesson to show me. I did not particularly encourage this - although I did not discourage it. The journals were to provide direct feedback, coming right from the perceptions of the children. Therefore I did not want to influence the children in any way by making direct comment in their journal.

Rapport and communication were developed during the lesson, before and after the lesson, during the classroom visits and at other pre-arranged times, if requested by the children - e.g. 'We have been working on a dance routine. Can we show you at lunchtime?' (request from three girls).

The children's journals indicated that they all enjoyed the sharing. I kept the presentation very low key, because it was never my intention to get into polished performance or theatrical aspects. The children, however, did appear to experience sensations (as their

journals revealed) which could be associated with performance:

This last lesson was my favourite. I like to perform in front of crowds - I had a great time.

I like to hear the people clap - it makes me feel good.

I loved the performance. Here are words to describe it: interesting, fun, funny, exciting, great, beautiful, gorgeous. Thank you very, very, very, very much!

I liked today because it was fun and good. But I got hot and sweaty. That feels good. Sincerely, J.P.

I liked it (the presentation) a lot. I got very hot because I was nervous and wearing a spandex body suit. Still, it was a lot of fun. Your student, A.

Today was great but nerve wracking. We did all the dances. P.S. Thank you.

Concluding Comment

The success of the sharing as revealed through the children's journals confirmed my own positive feelings about the creative dance programme. The sharing also exemplified the purpose and value of dance in education - i.e. written and verbal comments from the children testified to my belief that dance is a very important subject, worthy of inclusion in school curriculum.

The importance of dance in education, yet the precarious position dance holds, is summed up by Bruce (1988):

I perceive dance to be in danger of neglect in education because its value may not be obvious, especially to those who plan the curriculum. It

is not easy to teach. One must be willing and able to take risks, to tolerate some untidiness and uncertainty. It is not easy to measure or even for some to perceive the need for it to be taught...but it is important.⁷

(pp. 101-102)

Feedback from the Videotape Recordings

The videotape recordings verified and embellished my journal reflections. They gave me additional feedback of movement patterns and behaviours that I could not always be aware of as a participant-observer. The following is a summarized transcription of the creative dance programme as seen by the researcher through the eye of the camera. The transcription has been categorized using Rudolf Laban's Movement Analysis Framework, as outlined in Chapter Three, page 40. However, there are instances when the data does not seem to fit into the framework appropriately. This data is listed separately.

Body Awareness

Every lesson demonstrated that the children were all active and purposely engaged in body activity. Body awareness became evident as the children explored movement material and discovered and practiced 'What the body can do'. As the lessons progressed whole body actions became clearer. The body became more clearly co-ordinated with a sense of relationship and 'wholeness' occurring between body parts.

⁷Dr. Violet Bruce has been teaching and researching dance with elementary and high school students for forty years.

Effort

The effort factor - the conceptual and kinaesthetic understanding of time, weight, space and flow was observed. This was evidenced while observing whole body actions. There was improvement in the quality of the actions - they became 'sharper' and more articulate. Movements performed in isolated parts of the body also improved. For example leg and arm gestures became clearer in terms of time and weight qualities. Such gestures also became integrated body movements rather than 'appendages' merely moving, with no quality being contained in the other areas of the body.

Space

The children demonstrated an understanding of spatial orientation. They used the general space well and did not cluster together. They created appropriate and interesting spatial pathways when travelling through the space. They were able to 'share' the space well. There were no incidents of collision or insensitivity. This indicates that they were able to 'solve the problem' when two people were about to land in the same space, rather than 'cause a problem'. An understanding of movement phrasing and motif building was demonstrated. Starting positions, transitions (between movements), focus and ending positions became clearer. The creation and use of rhythmic patterns as they cut through and around the

general and personal space were observed. This was particularly evident in the Robbers' dance where the placement of each rhythmic pattern (within each child's personal space) was clear.

Relationship

The children demonstrated understanding of whole group relationship and partner relationship. As mentioned above, they related their actions to others - whether within the whole group or within the pair situation, with sensitivity. They demonstrated less sensitivity to small group relationship.

Other observations

The children demonstrated a 'movement memory'; they were able to remember the ordering of content, and content itself, as it appeared in each dance. This was very evident in the Rodeo dance where the children had to memorize five movement motifs. Each motif used a sequence of body actions and one of the motifs used a specific step pattern.

As the lessons progressed I observed that the children were able to create more readily on their own. They were developing a 'movement imagination' - in other words they would improvise spontaneously (when appropriate) and 'take risks' rather than rely on me for every direction or detail. They demonstrated that they were able to use the medium of dance to symbolize

concepts and communicate in a non-verbal manner. This was demonstrated particularly in the Robbers' dance and Rodeo dance.

Mrs. Allan and Miss Black: Taped Interview

I met with Mrs. Allan and Miss Black three days after the sharing, at Golden Grove School. The following is a summary of our forty-five minute interview. The interview followed a guided question format. There was a fair amount of discussion, with subsidiary questions arising from both the interviewees and interviewer.

Question #1. What were your overall impressions of the Creative Dance Programme?

Both teachers stated that they were impressed with the programme. They believed that the programme, ...'offered the children a lot' and, '...most of the children were able to take from it'.

Mrs. Allan:

I think just them knowing that dance is not something 'sissy', that it takes time to learn and that boys and girls can do it - is a good thing. That it takes energy and can be strenuous - and just knowing how their bodies can move and what their bodies can portray, and what they feel - is very important.

Miss Black:

I also saw how they can show their feelings through expression and movement. I liked the way you used so many describing words to get them to move and show feelings and portray images. The focus was really neat; how you made them focus and concentrate.

Question #2. Do you think a Creative Dance Programme - doing creative dance - is a good way for children to experience affect?

Mrs. Allan:

Definitely; children need to use their imagination and be creative in this way... creative dance is a part of the curriculum but it's a part of the curriculum that teachers tend to shy away from.

Miss Black:

Creative dance is a valuable way of expressing yourself. These children (grade 5/6) had a great experience. I wouldn't have believed they could do what they did.

I asked Mrs. Allan why it is that teachers 'shy away' from teaching creative dance:

Teachers just don't know how to go about teaching it. They need to see it...The specifics (skills) are helpful and necessary but aren't the only thing. I think it's a matter of watching someone with an expertise - just seeing the methodology and what happens in a lesson.

Interviewer: So observations - being part of the lesson is important?

Mrs. Allan: Definitely - exactly.

Miss Black:

Both teachers agreed that most teachers don't know how to get started with creative dance. They need practical workshops and in-services. They also suggested that a system for sharing resources - a resource centre perhaps (ideas, music) is necessary. Both teachers felt that dance was not promoted at all by the School board or department of Education: 'If there is anything going on in dance it must be low-key because I (we) don't know about it'. Mrs. Allan indicated strongly that she felt

confident, after watching the creative dance programme, that she could start some dance work. However, without ongoing help and some resources it would take, 'one hundred percent of my time to do it properly - with all the other things I have to do as an elementary teacher'.

Question #3. Can you say specifically how the children benefitted from the programme?

Both teachers stressed the benefits of creative and imaginative work. Miss Black affirmed Mrs. Allan's statement that, 'children, particularly this age group, need to - and actually like to - use their bodies in an expressive way to communicate ideas and feelings'. Both teachers concurred in the opinion that children (of ten and eleven years) relate readily to physical activity. They noted that several boys who are often negative in class responded positively to creative dance. Both teachers indicated that this was because the boys received a 'lot of praise...a lot of positive reinforcement'. They also agreed that the content of the programme was appealing to the boys as well as the girls.

Miss Black:

Most of the time the children just felt good about it all. You could see it when they danced. They were also positive about it (the lesson) when they came back to the classroom...T., well he usually fools around a lot - but he didn't fool around in dance. I wish more teachers could have observed the programme.

Both teachers agreed that learning the language of dance, building a specific dance vocabulary and learning

skills brought importance, value and credibility to the dance programme, and the children benefitted from this:

Mrs. Allan:

Specifics are important. They need to learn the skills. It made them feel secure, good - when you showed them skills to practice. It gave them a framework, and something to hang onto...the clear images you gave them - the way you described the dances made them interested...they learned things about what their bodies could do.

Miss Black:

Yes; and they liked the way you interacted with them. They related really well to it all...and you (your methods). Specific benefits would be - they learned how to manage their bodies; they learned skills, they learned how to portray ideas using their bodies.

Question #4. What do you think the down points of the programme were, the things that didn't work so well?

Both teachers agreed that the Robbers' dance was the 'highlight of the programme' They concurred that the music and the story were very appropriate and seemed to interest all the children. They agreed that the Rodeo dance was challenging. There were more specific skills to learn (step patterns). Again, they agreed that the music 'helped the dance along' and 'although the dance had structure, it wasn't too structured...but they did have to concentrate a lot'.

Both teachers stated that the 'rock' dance was slower and they (the children) didn't seem to enjoy it as much. However, both Mrs. Allan and Miss Black stated that after the children had worked through the process of learning the dance they enjoyed performing it. Mrs. Allan felt

that some children got 'a bit lost in the dance' because there was less concrete material (images) to hang onto. Miss Black agreed with this, adding that the dance was 'more expressive, abstract, vague in nature'.

Interviewer: What about the group work?

Both teachers stated that group work was challenging for the children. They both agreed that group interaction and communication was difficult for most of them. They also felt the children preferred working with music. Both teachers agreed that group work should be encouraged and developed in a prescribed Creative Dance Programme. However, careful consideration should be given to 'who is in what group, the task, and build up to the actual group situation' (Miss Black). Mrs. Allan commented that teachers would need to be familiar with group dynamics because, 'group work is not as easy as it may appear, especially when working with ten- and eleven-year olds'. Both teachers indicated that I was able to quickly remedy potentially hazardous moments, but Mrs. Allan pointed out that a less experienced teacher might encounter unforeseen difficulties with group work, if introduced prematurely.

Conclusions

The taped interview confirmed and reaffirmed my own journal entries. Both of these teachers were very much involved with the grade five/six children, and had both been present at all but one of the dance classes. Mrs.

Allan is an experienced teacher. She is very familiar with both the needs of elementary age children, and the curriculum. Her perceptions and observations were very valuable. The interview offered further insights into the outcomes and evaluation of the Creative Dance Programme.

Feedback From the Parents

The Questionnaire

At the conclusion of the Creative Dance Programme, twenty-two questionnaires were mailed to the parents of the children. A stamped, addressed envelope was enclosed for the return response. Within one week I received seven responses. The following week I received no further responses. I then mailed out the questionnaire again, requesting parents to complete it if they had not already done so. Six additional responses were sent to me. During a visit to Golden Grove School I spoke with the children asking them to remind their parents to complete the questionnaire. Two questionnaires were returned to Golden Grove School. The total number of questionnaires returned was therefore fifteen out of twenty-two. Confidentiality was secured by requesting anonymous responses.

I was disappointed that I did not get a higher number of questionnaires returned, especially since the sample

was small. However, one of the disadvantages of the questionnaire is the potential for low return.

The parent questionnaire (see appendix) provided me with indirect feedback which reaffirmed the benefits of the creative dance programme. Every parent (out of the fifteen who responded) indicated that they had asked their child about the creative dance programme:

I asked J and she said she liked the creative dance a lot. Thank you for coming to the school and working with the children.

B liked creative dance. Thank you for working with my child.

It was terrific - good luck with your future endeavours.

The following is a summary of the questionnaire responses:

Every parent indicated that there should be more creative dance at the elementary school level. No one elaborated further.

Every parent stated, 'Yes' - creative dance does have advantages and, 'Yes' - it does help children to express and communicate feelings:

I believe that the creative dancing gives my child new and different ideas.

Creative dance contributes towards the child's perception of spatial awareness, develops fine and gross motor skills, as well as body awareness...it is a means of expressing ideas...contributes to affective learning and self esteem.

It (creative dance) definitely helps children express feelings and communicate ideas. Creative

dance should be stressed more in curriculum requirements.

Creative dance is a means of expressing ideas...this is vital to positive self image and increasing social skills.

Creative dance improves self confidence - any activity that promotes self confidence contributes to well being.

Creative dance allows my child to explore feelings never explored in a routine type of dance. Because feelings can be explored self confidence - knowing oneself - can be gained...Creativity is most important in this age. We are living in a rigid world. Anything that motivates the imagination is good!

The questionnaire responses indicated that the feedback the parents had received from the children was positive. The questionnaire gave the parents an opportunity to validate or negate the creative dance programme. Without exception there was validation.

Parent Interviews

I randomly selected and telephoned four parents to request an interview. Three interviews were conducted over the telephone and one was conducted at Golden Grove School. Two interviewees were the parents of girls; two were the parents of boys. I based the guided questions on the parent questionnaire format. The parent interviews proved to be less informative than I had anticipated. One interviewee appeared to be completely at ease and responded and elaborated readily during our telephone conversation. She was somewhat familiar with the field of study. The other three interviewees were

positive about the creative dance programme but were somewhat brief in their replies. They were not familiar with the field of study at all and were at times 'lost for words'. Three out of the four interviewees had completed the parent questionnaire. All four parents valued artistic activities and were 'very happy' that the creative dance programme had been offered. Each parent stated that there should be 'more creative dance' in schools. One parent expressed a concern that, 'other dimensions of the physical education curriculum take precedence over dance...I would personally like to see them (the children) do more dance'. The other three parents were unaware of the Alberta curriculum regulation that creative dance should be included within the physical education program of studies.

It may have been more informative and productive for data to have conducted parent interviews in a group setting. This may have stimulated group discussion. In a group setting I may have been able to evoke elaborated responses. I could have also recorded all the conversations - using the 'playback' technique as a method of gathering citations. As it was I was able to use my interview notes to confirm the responses gathered from the parent questionnaire, and add to my compilation of parents' comments.

The following quotes are from the parent interviews:

Yes, there should be more creative dance in schools.

Yes, creative dance has benefits. It teaches children to listen, participate, coordinate movements, exercise and move gracefully...Yes, I believe that it (creative dance) helps them express ideas and feelings...Yes, I do believe that is important. Children need to express feelings - it's an important part of learning - you know.

Yes, I do believe it is important for children to express feelings. It makes them feel good about themselves - expressing how they feel or working things out in dance...putting over their ideas.

No! I do not think creative dance is a waste of time - no, definitely not!

No, I definitely do not think creative dance is a waste of time. Actually, I would like to do some! Do you teach adult classes?

Every parent thanked me for the work I had done with the children and wished me 'Good luck' with the project.

Chapter Four has presented the Creative Dance Programme as taught at Golden Grove School. The teaching process has been discussed and data gathered during the process has been presented. Significant findings from this data will be presented in Chapter Five. On the basis of these findings conclusions will be drawn and recommendations will be offered.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In Chapter One, two research questions were put forward: 1) What are the benefits of a creative dance programme? and 2) What are the attitudes and feelings of children towards creative dance?. In Chapter Two, selected literature was presented which supported the inclusion of creative dance in education. Chapter Three described the Creative Dance Programme into which the children were immersed. The data gathered through this study and presented in Chapter Four provided possible answers to the questions as posed in Chapter One.

Chapter Five summarizes and presents significant findings, draws conclusions and offers recommendations.

Benefits of a Creative Dance Programme: Question #1

The data gathered through interviews, questionnaires, videotaping and journal writing demonstrate a number of benefits:

A.1 Contribution of creative dance to emotional well-being

There is evidence that creative dance contributed to emotional well-being of this group of children. This is documented through:

- children's journals (p. 77);
- parent questionnaires (pp. 87-88);
- parent interviews (p. 90);

teacher interviews (pp. 81-83).

There were recurring statements in the children's journals such as, 'I liked today because it was good and fun', and 'It [creative dance] makes me feel good' (Chapter Four, p. 77). Such statements provide positive evidence that creative dance contributes to 'emotional wellbeing'.

Parents, without exception, made positive statements regarding their children's experience in the creative dance programme. Examples of such statements were, 'Creative dance definitely helps children express feelings and communicate ideas' (Chapter Four, p. 88). Another recurring statement was 'Yes, I do believe it is important for children to express feelings - it makes them feel good about themselves' (Chapter Four, p. 90). Again, this provides evidence that strongly supports creative dance as contributing to emotional well-being.

Teachers (through observing the programme) strongly agreed that the creative dance programme contributed to affective development. This is evidenced through the statement ... 'the children just felt good about it all. You could see it when they danced' (Chapter Four, p. 83). Positive statements were also made by the children to their teacher, after the dance lessons (Chapter Four, p. 84).

A.2 Contribution of creative dance to the development of physical skills

There is evidence that creative dance contributes to the development of physical skills. This is documented through:

parent questionnaires (pp. 87-88);

parent interviews (p. 90);

teacher interviews (pp. 84-86);

videotape recordings (pp. 78-80).

Evidence was given by parents with statements such as, 'Creative dance contributes towards....gross motor skills as well as body awareness' (Chapter Four, p. 87) and 'It [creative dance] teaches children to coordinate movements, exercise and move gracefully' (Chapter Four, p. 90).

Evidence was given during the teacher interviews which supports the contribution of dance to physical skills. Statements were made such as 'They learned how to manage their bodies; they learned [physical] skills' (Chapter Four, p. 84).

The videotape recordings provide additional evidence (through numerous observations of the children) that children develop physical skills during creative dance. The notes made by the researcher while observing the videotape recordings support this: 'As the lessons progressed whole body actions became clearer. The body became more clearly coordinated with a sense of

relationship occurring between body parts...there was improvement in the quality of the actions - they became "sharper" and more articulate' (Chapter Four, p. 79).

A.3 Contribution of creative dance to conceptual understanding

There is also evidence that creative dance contributes to conceptual understanding. This is documented through:

- parent questionnaires (pp. 87-88);
- parent interviews (p. 90);
- teacher interviews (pp. 83-84);
- videotape recordings (pp. 79-80).

Parents strongly agreed that creative dance helps children express conceptual ideas: 'creative dance is a means of expressing ideas...creative dance definitely helps children express feelings and communicate ideas' (Chapter Four, p. 88).

Statements gathered during the teacher interviews such as 'they [the children] had to concentrate a lot' and ...'they learned how to portray ideas'...(Chapter Four, p. 84), provides more evidence that observations were made which showed the linking of conceptual understanding (the understanding of a movement concept) to creative dance (expressing an idea through symbolic representation).

The videotape recordings documented conceptual understanding through creative dance as transcribed

through the following statements: 'The children demonstrated a "movement memory"; they were able to remember the ordering of content, and content itself, as it appeared in each dance..they were able to use the medium of dance to symbolize concepts and communicate in a non-verbal manner...this was very evident in the Rodeo dance where the children had to memorize five movement motifs' (Chapter Four, pp. 80-81).

Conclusions to question #1

The data presented in Chapter Four, and summarized here as significant findings, clearly implies that creative dance has benefits. The research in this study provides evidence that emotional well-being, physical skill development and conceptual understanding were outcomes of the creative dance programme. Such outcomes may be considered as benefits of creative dance.

What are the Attitudes and Feelings of Children Towards Creative Dance?

There is considerable evidence that positive attitudes and feelings were experienced during the ten lesson programme of creative dance.

This is documented through:

children's journals (pp. 46, 47, 57, 58, 76, 77);

children's interviews (pp. 71-73);

parent questionnaires (p. 87);⁸

parent interviews (p. 90);

teacher interviews (pp. 81-83).

B.1 Children's Journals

The children's journals indicate that they experienced positive feelings and attitudes towards creative dance. Recurring statements such as, 'I enjoyed dance today', and 'I really liked the dance classes'...(Chapter Four, p. 76), demonstrate the childrens' positive responses.

B.2 Children's Interviews

Every child participating in the creative dance programme experienced positive feelings about creative dance (Chapter Four, p. 71). During the interviews every child made a statement such as, 'It feels good to dance'...and ...'dance made me feel happy' (Chapter Four, p. 73). The documentation in Chapter Four, page 72, reveals that all of the nine boys participating in the programme had negative feelings about dance in general at the commencement of the programme. These feelings

⁸The strength of the data may lie in the direct feedback from the children. However, indirect feedback from the parents and teachers is included, since it provided additional positive evidence. Every parent indicated on the returned questionnaire that they had spoken with their child about the creative dance programme. I had requested that they do this so that they might draw out feelings and attitudes from their child, rather than respond to the questionnaire with theoretical opinions.

were reversed during the ten lessons. There were recurring comments from boys such as:

...I did Swedish dancing and it was boring. This dancing was much better. I wasn't bored at all. I thought I would be bored but I wasn't.

...I (the creative dance programme) wasn't like I thought it was going to be. It was good. I liked it (p. 72).

Conclusions to direct feedback

The interview data and journal records reveal that dance content and selection of music, consistent with developmental needs, were prime factors in the success of the creative dance programme. In other words, the children liked the content and music, and therefore felt positive about creative dance. This is indicated by recurring statements such as:

Yes I liked the dance programme - I liked the Hallowe'en dance and Robbers' a lot...I like fast actions (Chapter Four, p. 71).

I really liked the music and actions (Chapter Four, p. 46).

It was fun - I liked the music and movements (Chapter Four, p. 47).

B.3 Parent questionnaire

There is supporting documentation from the parent questionnaire that the children experienced positive feelings and attitudes. Statements such as 'I asked J. and she said she liked the creative dance a lot', and 'B liked creative dance'...(Chapter Four, p. 87), indicate a positive response to creative dance.

B.4 Parent Interviews

The four parents who were interviewed reported to me that their children responded positively to the creative dance programme (Chapter Four, p. 90). Parents were unanimously in support of the programme (p. 90) and indicated strongly that such a creative dance programme should continue: 'No! I do not think creative dance is a waste of time - no, definitely not!' (p. 90).

B.5 Teacher interviews

The teacher interviews also show that the children experienced positive attitudes and feelings during the creative dance programme. The following statement summarizes this:

...They were also positive about it (the lesson) when they came back to the classroom...T., well he usually fools around a lot - but he didn't fool around in dance' (p. 83).

Conclusions of indirect feedback

The parents of the children and the two teachers who were observers of the programme strongly indicated the value and importance of the programme. The teachers attributed the success of the programme to appropriate and stimulating dance content that appealed to both boys and girls (p. 83); suitable and appealing music (p. 84); appropriate teaching methods, consistent with developmental characteristics (p. 84); positive interaction with the children which included an emphasis on positive reinforcement and praise (p. 83).

Recommendations

The research presented here was a field study. It gives an indication that creative dance can be valuable in the elementary school curriculum, for a number of reasons already discussed. The value of creative dance in the elementary school is recognized by the Alberta Department of Education at the policy level because dance is accorded a place in the elementary school curriculum:

Children should experience dance activities ... emphasizing the expressive aspect of movement in which the body is used as a means for communicating ideas and feelings.

(Alberta Department of Education, 1984)

However, at the level of practice creative dance does not have the position in the curriculum which it occupies in theory. Even at Golden Grove School, an arts-orientated school, there is not a creative dance programme.

There might be a number of reasons for not teaching creative dance. One may be that teachers do not have a positive attitude towards dance. This may be due to: a) they do not understand its benefits, b) they do not know how to teach it, and c) they have little or no personal experience in dance and feel ill-prepared or not able to present it.

To remedy this unsatisfactory situation I would recommend the following action:

- 1) The teaching of dance in elementary schools by specialists who would cover a number of schools.
- 2) The strengthening of University dance programmes to produce a) a supply of dance specialists, and b) to give education students a chance to develop an appreciation of the benefits of dance.

Dance specialists in elementary schools

There are already a number of art and music specialists (employed as specialists or consultants by E.P.S.B.) who operate from one school to another. Therefore, the 'travelling' dance teacher would not constitute much of an innovation, nor would it require a great number of specialists.

There are about 120 elementary public schools in the City of Edmonton. Assuming that each has an average of six grades, each of which is to receive one dance class per week then it would require 36 dance specialists each giving 20 dance classes a week, to cover all the schools. This assumes that each class would get one dance lesson per week throughout the year.

Since Edmonton Public School Board is unlikely to hire 36 dance specialists, a more realistic assumption would be that the dance specialists only cover a certain number of schools - those that have an artistic emphasis. Given the present 'open boundary' policy, parents could choose to send their children to such schools. This

would not only reduce the number of specialists required but would also ensure a more receptive attitude to the dance programme. Both the children and the teachers in such arts orientated schools would be likely to view dance more favourably than those not orientated towards artistic programmes.

The strengthening of University of Alberta programmes:

There are dance courses that elementary education students can take. However, these courses are not compulsory. Therefore, many newly graduated elementary school teachers have not had an opportunity while at University to develop an appreciation of the benefits of dance. Most of them have never even taken one dance course, still less have taken the number of dance courses that would be required in order to develop the ability to teach dance.

A greater general appreciation of the benefits of dance among elementary school teachers might be developed through:

- a) adding to the fine arts option the possibility of taking a dance course,

or

- b) making one of the existing dance courses compulsory

The measures suggested above are intended to produce only a greater appreciation of dance on the part of the generalist elementary school teacher. They will

certainly not produce specialists. This latter goal can best be achieved through the creation of a department of dance within the University. Individuals intending to become teachers of creative dance could obtain a solid grounding in such a department.

The measures described here would lead to increased prominence, in the elementary school system, for creative dance. The evidence presented in this thesis indicates that such increased prominence of creative dance would constitute an improvement in our system of public education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of permission to conduct research within
the Edmonton Public School system

University of Alberta
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
Department of Physical Education and Sport Study

October 15, 1989

Dear Parents:

I am at present involved in graduate research at the University of Alberta. I am investigating childrens' attitudes and feelings towards movement activities, particularly creative dance. I have designed a 10-week programme of dance suitable for elementary children and will be teaching this during October and November. I will be having most of the sessions videotaped. This will allow me to observe at my leisure the programme I am teaching. The children will also have an opportunity to view themselves!

Later, I shall be inviting parents to complete a questionnaire regarding this programme. Samples of both children and parents will also be interviewed.

I am very much looking forward to working with the children and hope they will enjoy this project. If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me at 436-2199.

Thank you,

Christina Tozer

The University of Alberta
Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
Department of Physical Education and Sport Studies
Research in childrens' creative dance

October 15, 1989

Researcher: Christina Tozer
University of Alberta
Department of Physical Education and
Sport Studies

Research Advisor: Professor D. Shogan, Ph.D.
University of Alberta
Department of Physical Education and
Sport Studies

CONSENT

With full consent I hereby authorize Christina Tozer and the University of Alberta to make visual recordings of my minor child. These recordings will be the property of Christina Tozer and the University of Alberta and are intended only for educational/research purposes.

Date: October through November, 1989

Location: Virginia Park Elementary School, Edmonton

Signed: _____ Parent/Guardian

Date: _____

I sincerely thank you for your co-operation which will enable me to record and document dance in elementary education.

Christina Tozer

APPENDIX B

Guided questions for children's journals

1. Did you understand the verbal instructions as given by the teacher (myself)?
2. Did the teacher's demonstrations help you? How did they help you?
3. How did you feel when you were dancing? (sad?, happy?, confused?, awkward?)
4. Did your feelings change? When?
5. How did you feel today when you first came in to the lesson?
6. How did you feel at the end of the lesson?
7. List 3 (or more) words telling me how you feel right now.
8. What dance did you like best today? Why?
9. What dance didn't you like? Why?
10. What music did you like best today?
11. What music did you not like today?
12. What did you learn today?
13. What did you like about the teacher today?
14. What didn't you like about the teacher today?
15. I like dance because _____
16. I do not like dance because _____
17. What were you doing before dance today?
18. Write anything you want to in your journal (now).
19. During the week write anything you want to about dancing (or today's lesson) in your journal.
20. During the week, if you want, draw me a picture about how you feel when you are dancing, or how you feel before and afterwards.

APPENDIX C**Guided questions for children's interviews**

NOTE REGARDING STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Walker and Adelman (1975) make several points regarding children/teacher interviews:

1. Be a sympathetic, interested, attentive listener, without taking an active conservative role; this is a way of conveying that you value and appreciate the child's opinion.
2. Be neutral with respect to subject matter. Do not express your own opinions...and be careful not to betray feelings of surprise or disapproval at what the child knows.
3. Your own sense of ease is important.
4. The students may be fearful that they will expose an attitude or idea that you don't think correct. Reassure along the lines of 'Your opinions are important to me'.
5. Specifically, we suggest:

Phrase questions similarly each time.

Keep the outline of interview questions before you.

Be prepared to reword a question if it is not understood..sometimes it is hard not to give an

'answer' to the question in the process of rewording

it. (p. 140)

Hopkins (1985), Bowen et al (n.d.) and Acheson and Gall (1980) all concur on the effectiveness of the

guidelines described above. Bearing in mind that experts in the field of qualitative research methods have found these guidelines useful and effective, the researcher believes it is worthwhile adhering to the suggested advice.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Did you enjoy the creative dance programme? (All the time? Sometimes?)

Probe: Why? Why not?

2. Have you done creative dance before?

Probe: Probe to find out exact type of dance, if done before. How was this dance different?

3. Did the lesson last long enough?

4. Did you learn anything? (new)

5. Was the lesson ever boring?

Probe: How? Why? When?

6. Which dances did you enjoy most? Least?

Probe: Why? What could the teacher have done different?

7. Which dances made you feel very happy?

Probe: Why? (was it the dance or really something else?) Were you happy when you came into the lesson?

8. What lesson do you have before dance? Do you like that lesson?

9. What lesson do you have after dance? Do you like that lesson?

10. How did the researcher (teacher) help you?

11. How did you feel about doing this dance programme?

12. How do you feel now it is over?

13. Would you like to do it again?

14. Other comments.

APPENDIX D

The parent questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Has your child spoken about the creative dance programme?
2. What do you understand creative dance to be?
3. Have your opinions about creative dance changed during the creative dance programme?
4. How do you think creative dance contributes to the development of the child?
5. Has your child ever done creative dance at school before?
6. Should there be more creative dance in schools?
7. Do you think creative dance has advantages?
8. Does creative dance provide anything that will be of value outside the class?
9. Do you think creative dance is a waste of time?

10. Do you think creative dance contributes to emotional well-being?

11. Do you think creative dance is a social activity?

12. Do you think creative dance helps children to express and communicate feelings?

13. Do you think it is important for children to express their feelings?

14. Other comments?

APPENDIX E

Format for the parent interviews

Sample questions:

1. Would you care to make any comment about the questionnaire?

Probe: Was it too short? long? would you like to make any additional comments?

2. Has your child mentioned the creative dance programme at home? If so, could you comment on what was said? Enjoy it? Not enjoy it? Why/why not?
3. Do you think the creative dance programme has benefitted your child?

Probe: If comment is positive try and elicit as much information as possible regarding the benefits, attitude the child displayed and feelings towards the experience. If negative, probe as to why this was so.

4. Did your child comment on any particular dance or music?
5. Has your child demonstrated any of the dances at home?

Probe: How did you respond? Has your child mentioned that they would like to continue with this programme?

6. What comments (if any) has your child made regarding the teacher (researcher)?
7. Overall, how did your child respond to the creative dance programme?
8. Do you think dance has helped your child express their feelings?

Probe: How? Has your child talked about this?

9. Any other comments?